TEXAS Master Naturalist™ Elm Fork Chapter

Naturalist News

March 2025 Volume 25, Issue 3

A windy morning at Ray Roberts Lake State Park, Johnson Branch Unit, by Jonathan Reynolds

We're on the Web www.txmn.org/elmfork *On Facebook:* www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/

TEXAS Master Naturalist™ Elm Fork Chapter

Naturalist News

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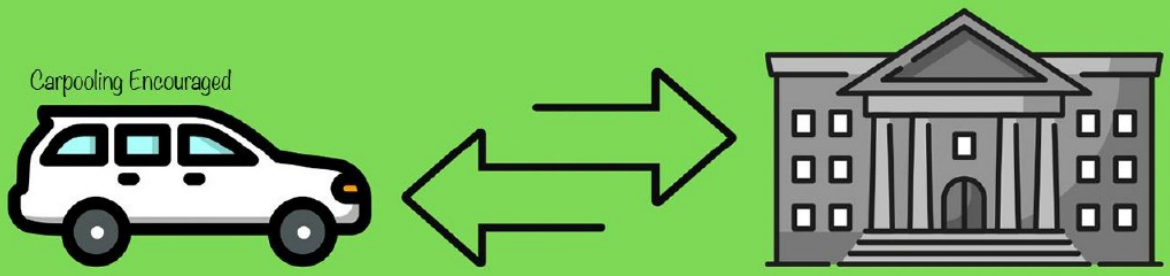
Field Pansy (*Viola bicolor*), from Becky Bertoni

Announcements

Effective March 1st, 2025, you can record Volunteer Service Time for Travel to and from Chapter Meetings



Similar to recording travel time to and from projects; record time up to and including the service time during the chapter meeting (which equals the business portion, but not the advanced training).

Members can now report service time in VMS for travel to and from each monthly chapter meeting not to exceed the chapter business portion of the chapter meeting. Example: if the chapter business portion is one hour, members can also include travel time up to one hour. As usual, service for attending the monthly chapter meeting is reported in VMS under "Chapter Administrative Work," Chapter Administration: "Chapter Meeting."

What Happens Next

Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, March 20th, 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:

The Trinity River: The Watery Tie that Binds North Texas

By Amy Martin

There is only one river in North Texas: the Trinity. Once rejected and forgotten, paid attention to only when it floods, the Trinity is transforming from a place of refuse to refuge. First, a short romp through our river follies, like when the West Fork was called River of Death and the insane attempts to turn the river into a barge canal. Then we'll take a tour of the Trinity's four forks—Clear, East, Elm, and West—exploring each one's unique characteristics, plus the nature preserves and attractions they are home to. Learn why the Elm Fork is the absolute heart of the Trinity. This riverine network is home to the Trinity River Paddling Trail, a National Park Service recreation trail with over 120 miles of floating fun.

A journalist and writer for over 40 years, Amy Martin is the author of *Wild DFW: Explore the Amazing Nature Around Dallas-Fort Worth* (www.Wild-DFW.com) on Timber Press, a phenomenally popular book in North Texas. She also wrote *Itchy Business: How to Treat the Poison Ivy and Poison Oak Rash, Prevent Exposure and Eradicate the Plant* (www.Itchy.biz). She is senior features writer for Green Source DFW (www.GreenSourceDFW.org). A current project is Ned Fritz Legacy, a biographical website of Ned Fritz, Texas' most famous environmentalist (www.nedfritz.com). Find her writings at www.Moonlady.com. Martin sits on the boards of Dallas County Open Space's Trails and Preserves Program (https://www.dallascounty.org/departments/plandev/openspaces) and Friends of Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (www.FriendsofLLELA.org).

Awards and Recognition

February 2025

Initial Certifications

Delia Croessmann	Class of 2024
Seylah Williams	Class of 2024

2025 Recertifications

Abigail Beck	Class of 2023
Becky Bertoni	Class of 2015
Sharon Betty	Class of 2018
Marilyn Blanton	Class of 1999
Leonard Chochrek	Class of 2019
Hilton Dickerson	Class of 2009
Whit Dieterich	Class of 2022
Jeanne Erickson	Class of 1998
Jim Gerber	Class of 2019
Jerry Hamby	Class of 2014
Lin Hampton	Class of 2022
Vin Merrill	Class of 2011
Tom Mills	Class of 2014
Carl Parsons	Class of 2023
Marissa Shaw	Class of 2023
Fran Witte	Class of 2017
Sue Yost	Class of 2017
Betty Zajac	Class of 2003

Awards and Recognition

February 2025

250 Hour Milestone

Daniel Graves Class of 2024

1000 Hour Milestone

Andrea Dixon Class of 2023

1500 Hour Milestone

Regina Dale Class of 2019

3500 Hour Milestone

Diane Wetherbee Class of 2000

4500 Hour Milestone

Mary Cissell Class of 2015

Field Notes in Focus

Snow geese (*Anser caerulescens*) at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge,
by Jonathan Reynolds

Nature's Notebook Observer Certification Course

March 20th, 2025, 9:00 AM

The Observer Certification Course provides an orientation to using Nature's Notebook to collect data on the timing of plant and animal life cycle events. The course covers the basics on setting up sites, selecting plants and animals to observe, collecting data with the mobile app, an in-depth look at the plant and animal phenophases and intensity measures, and a chance to practice making observations.

Upon successful completion of the course, you will become an official Certified Observer. You will receive a completion certificate, a badge for your Observation Deck, and you will be tagged in the Nature's Notebook database as a Certified Observer.

The course consists of five learning modules that are broken into lessons with a quiz at the end of each lesson. You must obtain 100% on each quiz to successfully pass each lesson. If you do not correctly answer the quiz questions on the first try, you have an unlimited number of opportunities to go back and correct your answers to satisfy the 100% requirement.

You can return to the modules after completion to review the material at any time.

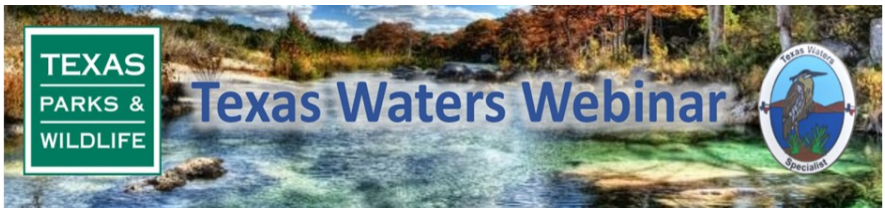
We hope that the Observer Certification Course helps you to become more confident with your Nature's Notebook observations.

Participants will need to register and set up a profile with National Phenology Network to access the learning videos. Visit the USA National Phenology Network at https://usanpn.org/, then go to "Observe with Nature's Notebook" > Your Observation Deck> Create New Account" The course will then be available at https://learning.usanpn.org/.

This training is supplemental to the ZOOM training we are doing for the Time to Restore project. The course is five self-paced on-line modules for a total of 5.5 training hours (Chapter Approved AT-Elm Fork). It will allow TMN members to join the Time to Restore project at any time in the future and complete the training required to become a Nature's Notebook Certified Observer. Tom Kirwan, Project Manager of Time to Restore, is available for 1:1 ZOOM calls to support anyone that wants a mentor to help them through the process. Tom's contact information can be found through the Members Area-Membership Directory on our website.

Inside Outside News

Approved AT



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

Wednesday, April 9 @ 6:30-7:30 PM CT - Matt Johnson, Texas Freshwater Mussel Conservation and Recovery Coordinator with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Texas Freshwater Mussels
- Register

Wednesday, May 14 @ 6:30-7:30 PM CT - Dr. Benjamin Hutchins, Assistant Director & Groundwater Ecologist with Edwards Aquifer Research and Data Center & TRIAGE – Texas State University

- Dark Waters, Strange Creatures: Amazing Life in Texas Groundwater
- 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

Spring Green Up

Wednesday, March 19th
10:00 am - 11:30 am

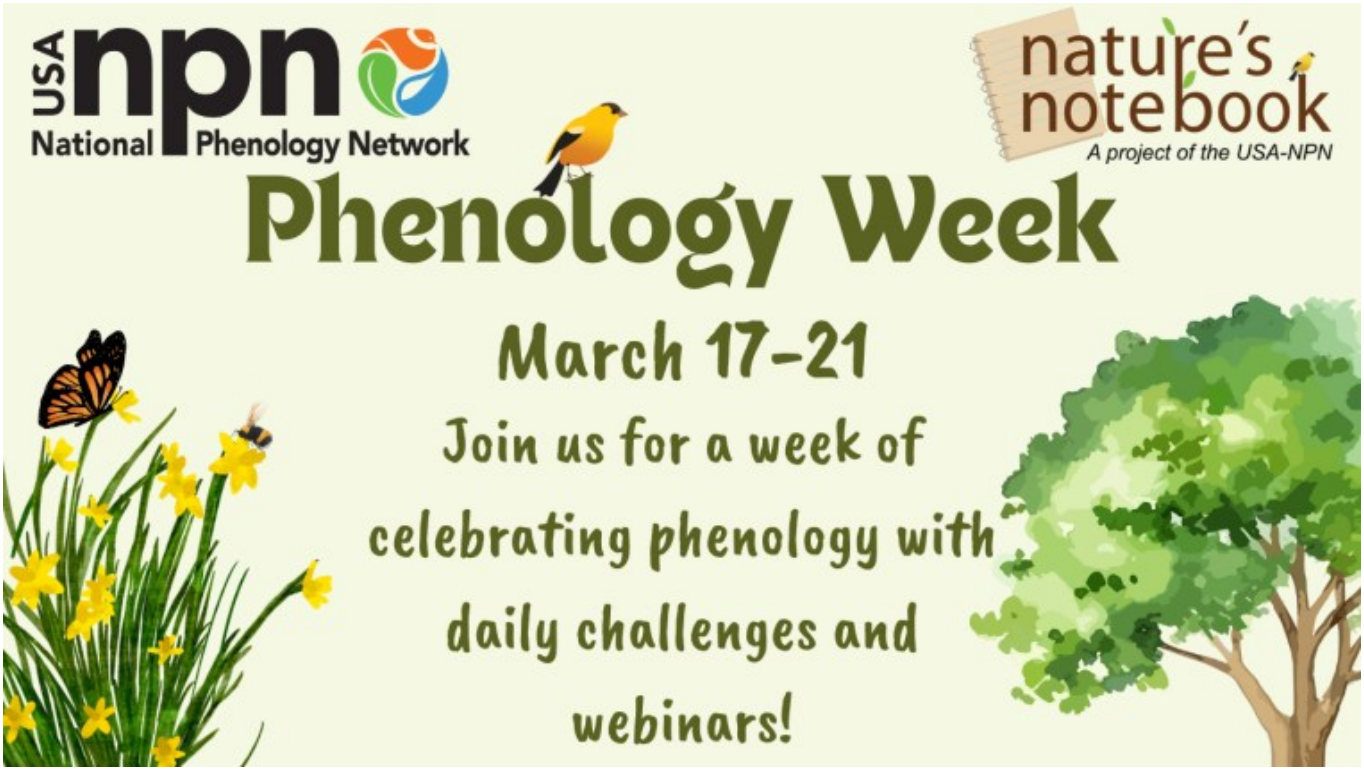
Join us on Zoom for "Spring Green Up." We'll have 5 short presentations on how plants green up and will give away lots of DOOR PRIZES!

- How Soil Temperature Dictates Plant Physiological Functions
- How a Grass Grows
- How a Forb Grows
- How a Brush Plant Grows
- What Makes a Plant an Early successional Species

You must register to receive the Zoom link the day before. It's FREE!
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PPGreenUP

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunity



March 17-21, 2025 is Phenology Week - a virtual celebration of the seasonal cycles of plants and animals. The purpose of Phenology Week is to celebrate YOU, our Nature's Notebook observers, Local Phenology Programs, and partners! We'll have webinars, awards, daily challenges, observer stories, and more.

Sign up for Phenology Week emails at
https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/sUzxRoW/PhenologyWeek

Sign up to stay in touch about Phenology Week. We'll send you the schedule for Phenology Week webinars and other events as well as daily emails with challenges, observers' stories and more.

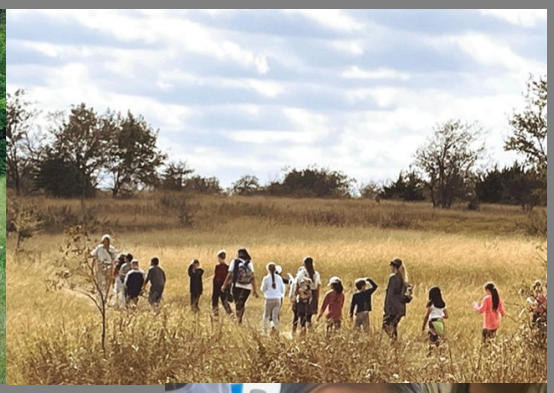
Save the dates for Future Phenology Weeks: March 16-20, 2026

See the Phenology Week website for more information and webinars at
https://www.usanpn.org/news/article/phenology-week-march-17-21-2025

Contact Tom Kirwan through the Members Area-Membership Directory for more information on Phenology Week and the Time to Restore Project, P250213.

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunity



Denton ISD School Days at Clear Creek
26 days: March 17—May 13

Volunteers…

…provide nature experience and education to thousands of second graders each spring.

…Spring 2025 stations: Snakes, Turtles, Bobcats, Owls, Hikes.

…Sign-up genius is available on the website calendar. There is something for everyone and we'd love to have you join us!

Join us for a brief hike or nature station as we introduce nature to Denton's 2nd graders. For some, it is their first experience. Will you help us light the love of nature in the next generation? Sign up for as many or as few days as you like. Commit to a set day of the week or mix it up. Your schedule is up to you. We look forward to having you join us for fun and smiles. Please review the available slots in the SignUpGenius.

Thank you! Nancy Blakney and Brenda Martin

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunity

Isle Du Bois School Field Trip Days

Isle du Bois Park and Nature Center will be hosting Field Trip Days for several public schools on several days over the next 3 months. Please look closely at the dates below, then go to the chapter website calendar to click on one of the "Isle Du Bois School Field Trip Days" and express your interest by emailing Mindy Shumate, Park Interpreter. (Mindy's contact info will be available after clicking on one of the field trip days.)

Mindy will be handling all the arrangements and TMN Volunteer assignments for these varying dates. There is no place to sign up for this in signupgenius. Simply email Mindy.

Dates

Wednesday, March 26th
9:15 AM to 3:00 PM

Friday, April 11th
9:15 AM to 3:00 PM

Wednesday, April 30th
9:15 AM to 3:00 PM

Thursday, May 1st
9:15 AM to 3:00 PM

Wednesday, May 7th
9:15 AM to 3:00 PM
(In case of bad weather, the date will be changed to Thursday, May 8th)

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunity

DFW SPRING 2025 VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

1. **Medlin Middle School + Northwest ISD + Expedition:**
   a. **Main Date:** Thu, March 27th, 2025
   b. **Bad Weather Make-Up Date:** Mon, March 31st, 2025
   c. **Location:** Northwest ISD Outdoor Learning Center
      i. 7773 Mulkey Rd, Northlake, TX 76247
      ii. https://maps.app.goo.gl/wCvMrPHtufsfTWP77

2. **Marsh Prep Academy + Dallas ISD + Expedition:**
   a. **Main Date:** Tue, April 8th, 2025
   b. **Bad Weather Date:** Tue, April 29th, 2025
   c. **Location:** Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area
      i. 201 E Jones St, Lewisville, TX 75057
      ii. https://maps.app.goo.gl/7HYmbiuBuHYjiS5GA

- Nine concurrently running stations centered around land, water & wildlife activities
- TWA provides all materials and training/talking points for each station.
- **Volunteers Receive:**
  - ◊ A free one year membership to the Texas Wildlife Association.
  - ◊ Lunch during the field day
  - ◊ Volunteer hours
- **Contact Gene Cooper to find out more: gcooper@texas-wildlife.org 945-227-5350.**

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunity

Nature Walk in the LBJ National Grassland

Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – noon

Sam Kieschnick, Mary Curry, and LBJ NG volunteers will lead participants across an open prairie, looking for native wildflowers.

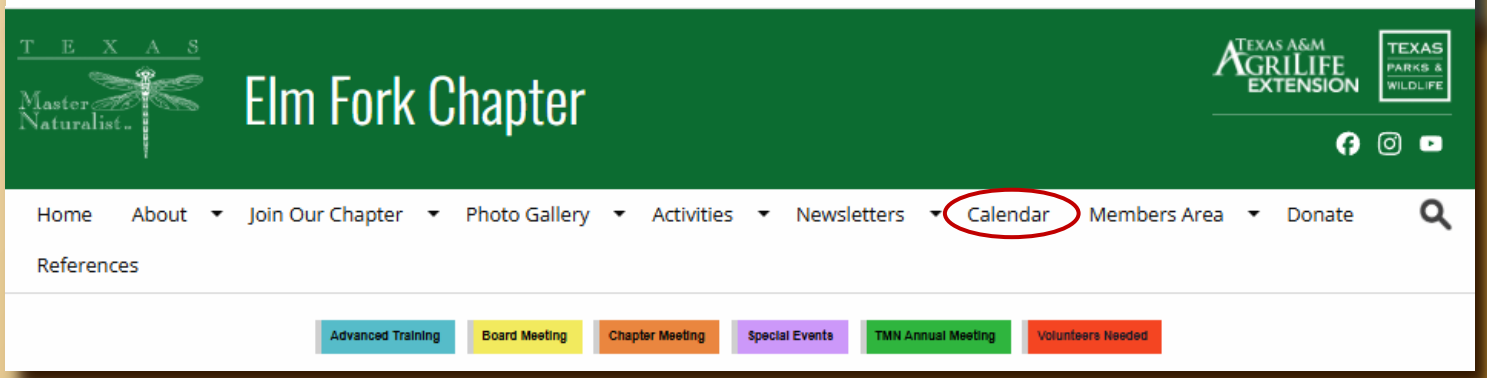
Expect a moderate-level hike of up to 2.5 miles.

Participation will be limited to 100 people, and registration will be available through SignUp Genius.

Participants may claim volunteer service hours (through iNaturalist) or project-specific advanced training.

SignUp Genius for this event is now available on the calendar.

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



Projects in the Community

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition

From Marilyn Blanton

Steve Carroll and Kerry Kearns

Lots of artwork! Lots of displays! Just in time for spring!

Displays of Texas native plants by Denton ISD fourth grade students from 24 elementary schools are now featured in the South Branch Library, the Emily Fowler Library, the North Branch Library and the Denton Senior Center. Over 450 pictures from the Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition are adding color to the facilities and bringing smiles to all who see them!

Susan Hamby and Ray Kreutzfeld

Continued on next page...

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition (cont.)

The Texas Native Plant Art Exhibition is an annual project sponsored by the Native Plant Society of Texas, the Texas Master Naturalist, Elm Fork Chapter and Texas Woman's University. The purpose of the project is to raise awareness of the importance of native plants and educate students about the role of native plants in conservation and our natural heritage.

An Appreciation Reception will be held at the Denton ISD Professional Development Center on April 23 from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm to honor the students and their art teachers. The reception will also express thanks to the display hosts and recognize the project sponsors. All of the almost 700 entries that were submitted will be displayed at the reception.

Left to right: Susan Hamby, Theresa Page, Sherry Smith, Karen Kearns, Kerry Kearns, Ray Kreutzfeld, Marilyn Blanton, Steve Carroll, and Mindy Anderson

Features

Exploration Green–Building a Park One Tree at a Time

By Jerry Hamby

Granite marker, Clear Lake City Golf Club

Less than three years after the Clear Lake City Water Authority (CLCWA) purchased an abandoned golf course in 2011, a master plan was developed to create a new kind of natural area in Southeast Houston. Exploration Green was on its way to becoming a 200-acre nature park–providing storm water management, creating habitat for native wildlife, and building six miles of ADA-compliant walking and biking trails. A conservation easement between the CLCWA and Galveston Bay Foundation, signed in 2014, led to the creation of Exploration Green Conservancy, thereby protecting the property in perpetuity.

Excavation of five lakes, each of which was engineered to hold up to100 million gallons of water, was expected to take fifteen years, but the process was completed in less than ten. Work on the first lake began in 2015, and the fifth lake was completed in 2023. While initial development of the park was financed through water district bonds, all other expenses came from grants and donations. In addition, thousands of native wetland plants and trees were provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Trees for Houston. However, work on the ground–supporting wetland plant and tree nurseries and organizing community planting events–was provided by hundreds of volunteers. As the park nears completion, lead volunteers continue to provide support. The last wetland plants and trees should be installed in 2026.

Aerial view of Exploration Green, 2024
(photo by Brian Jay)

Checking irrigation lines
(photo by Susan Hamby)

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey (in 2017), Exploration Green became a model for flood control through the "rewilding" of a suburban space. For the citizens of Clear Lake, it became a popular community park and a place to experience and learn about nature. For me, personally, Exploration Green provided a new set of skills and inspired me to join the Texas Master Naturalist program, and it all began with my volunteer work at the 1.5-acre on-site tree nursery.

Like most of the people who showed up for the first work events in 2014, I lived in a nearby neighborhood and was eager to pitch in as needed. After hundreds of native trees

Exploration Green—Building a Park One Tree at a Time *(cont.)*

were delivered to the nursery, our primary goal was to repot them from five-gallon to fifteen-gallon containers. The process of moving trees from a staging area, where they had been grouped by species, proved difficult to control as the repotted trees were brought to a larger mat in random order. My responsibilities that first day were to space the trees evenly and to run quarter-inch tubing and emitters from the main lines to the trees. Given the time pressure and our limited knowledge of species, our team did the best we could to organize the trees.

Allen Brown and Jerry Hamby
(photo by Susan Hamby)

After a follow-up volunteer event a month later, work in the nursery came to a halt as the lead organizer walked away from the project and left it to Allen Brown, an early supporter of the project, to monitor the trees on his own. Concerned about the fate of the nursery, I contacted Allen to discuss a plan for moving forward. As a result, a small group of volunteers organized monthly “First Saturday” workdays that soon expanded to twice-monthly events. Our initial focus was on reorganizing the nursery and repotting the remaining trees.

At the same time, the tree nursery received additional support. Barry Ward, Executive Director with Trees for Houston, created a budget for the project that provided containers, potting soil, and thousands of trees (in addition to those he had already donated). Barry also trained lead volunteers on pruning techniques and the multi-step process for planting trees. When the master plan for Exploration was unveiled, the expectation was that planting would begin within eighteen months, but opposition to the project (by a small number of people in the community) delayed approval from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to allow the routing of reuse water to irrigate trees and fill the lakes in times of drought.

Barry Ward knocking dirt off an auger

Delays in planting meant that volunteer energies were focused on caring for the quickly growing trees. When the nursery was established, there were two mats—a staging area (on top of an old tee box), where small pots were bunched together and watered with rotating sprinklers, and a large mat with fourteen rows of trees connected to permanent irrigation lines. As the repotting efforts graduated to 30-gallon and 45-gallon containers, permanent irrigation was installed on the staging mat, and a third mat, also fully irrigated, was built to accommodate 45-gallon trees.

Installing an irrigation line

The tree nursery grew more than forty species of native trees, each of which was selected to enhance habitat diversity. Among the several species of oaks were white

Exploration Green–Building a Park One Tree at a Time *(cont.)*

Tree nursery, 2019

Tree delivery, 2019 (photo by Susan Hamby)

Exploration Green planting team, 2017 (photo by Susan Hamby)

(*Quercus alba*), bur (*Q. macrocarpa*), and swamp chestnut (*Q. michauxii*). As keystone species, oaks support everything from caterpillars to birds. While sugar hackberries (*Celtis laevigata*) are not popular landscaping trees, they provide food for birds and are host plants for several butterfly species, including the hackberry emperor (*Asterocampa celtis*). Among the shrubs we raised were American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), which are also important habitat species.

While the TCEQ review process played out, The CLCWA allowed Exploration Conservancy to plant fifty trees in a section of the park that would not be disturbed during later development. The community planting events took place over two weekends in February 2015 and gave lead volunteers a chance to test their organizational and planting skills. Once buried irrigation lines were installed, Allen and I monitored the trees and tested the irrigation system once a week. Among the first species we planted were red maple (*Acer rubrum*), cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), and baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum)*, the last of which we placed in a swale because of its ability to withstand flooding.

Over time volunteers were needed to maintain not only the tree nursery but also a native plant wetland nursery that was installed nearby. That facility, initially overseen by Mary Carol Edwards, AgriLife Extension Stormwater Wetland Program Specialist, consisted of ten above-ground tanks that grew deep-water plants, such as white water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*); emergent plants, including lanceleaf arrowhead (*Sagittaria lancifolia*); and species that adapt to dry-to-wet conditions, such as gulf cordgrass (*Sporobolus spartinae*).

The increased workload led to the need to engage a larger volunteer base. By 2015, two Texas Master Naturalist Chapters–Gulf Coast and Galveston Bay Area–were supporting work at Exploration Green, and later that year Spanish Club students from Lee College's Early College High School program became regular volunteers at both nurseries. We also worked closely with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, who completed Eagle and Gold Award projects for the park–tool sheds, picnic tables, bluebird nest boxes, and native bee nesting houses, among other projects. Scout troops were also among the many community groups that planted trees in the five sections, or phases, of the park.

Exploration Green—Building a Park One Tree at a Time *(cont.)*

Excavation of the first lake at Exploration Green began in the fall of 2015 and was developed in three stages over the next two years. By 2017 the TCEQ had approved installation of reuse water lines, which meant tree planting could be implemented on a large scale. Planting around the first lake took place between 2016 and 2018 and resulted in more than 750 trees being placed at various elevations. An additional 177 trees and shrubs were planted on a habitat island, which created unique opportunities and logistical challenges. Temporary docks were built on the mainland and the island, and the trees (in fifteen-gallon and thirty-gallon pots) were floated across the water using a pair of jon boats. It took five days—and the work of dozens of volunteers—to stage the four-hour planting event. On a Saturday morning in November 2017, 100 volunteers were ferried across the water in the same boats that had moved the trees. Above-ground irrigation lines were later installed, an approach repeated on three additional habitat islands.

Floating trees to habitat island

My volunteer work at Exploration Green continued through mid-2021 when I moved to North Texas. By the time planting was completed around the second lake and on another habitat island (in early 2021), more than 1,700 trees had been placed in the ground. As the pace of planting accelerated, more trees were delivered to the nursery, and the process of repotting, pruning, and weeding continued. After five years of watering and moving trees on and off the main mat, we leveled the ground, replaced the weed barrier, and replaced the irrigation lines.

Overgrown trees in 30-gallon pots

The two nurseries were located in the middle of what would eventually become the fifth lake, so both facilities had to be combined and relocated in January 2022, ahead of excavation. By then trees had been planted in half the park, and the inventory was reduced to less than half its peak capacity of 1,000. A smaller nursery was installed at the east end of the park, and while volunteers continue to look after the remaining trees, the accelerated pace of planting has necessitated the installation of smaller trees as well, most of which have been provided by Apache Corporation's tree grant program. Grants from H.E.B. have helped to supplement with larger trees. Of course, Trees for Houston still provides support.

Moving a cottonwood tree

In 2014 when Exploration Green was little more than a series of design drawings, opponents of the project warned of the blight that would accompany excavation—the destruction of hundreds of legacy trees and an endless

Exploration Green—Building a Park One Tree at a Time *(cont.)*

line of trucks removing dirt. The naysayers referred to the first trees delivered to the nursery as "sticks." In 2017, less than two years after hundreds of those trees were planted, they looked as though they had been there for decades. In 2019 we planted the last of the original nursery trees, one of which, an eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoids*), measured more than thirty feet tall. The roots had grown through the mat and were so deep that a chainsaw was required to cut through them. I removed the supports from that tree a year and a half later, and it is still alive.

Cottonwood trees two years after planting

The real legacy of Exploration Green is the enhancement of native habitat that followed the thousands of native wetland plants, trees, and upland forbs and grasses installed in the park. As of March 2025, almost 20,000 observations, representing 1,886 species, have been uploaded to the Exploration Green project on iNaturalist. When work on the park began, an estimated forty bird species were recorded on the old golf course. Ten years later, more than 200 species have been verified, including, most recently, the limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*), a wading bird that feeds on the invasive channeled and island apple snails (*Pomacea canaliculata* and *P. maculata*) in the lakes.

Removing supports from a cottonwood tree (photo by Susan Hamby)

I am proud to have contributed to the database of (mostly native) observations and am even more pleased to have witnessed the magic that can be created when a group of people dedicate themselves to making their community a better place to live, one tree at a time.

Limpkin at Exploration Green, 2024 (photo by Chuck Snyder)

All photographs by Jerry Hamby, except those noted

Tweet of the Month

By Sue Yost, class of 2017

American Goldfinch

Photo by Denver Kramer

The American Goldfinch is a small bird in the finch family. It is the only finch that does a complete molt. The male is a vibrant yellow with a striking jet-black cap in the summer and an olive color during the winter, while the female is a dull yellow-brown shade which brightens only slightly during the summer. The male displays brightly colored plumage during the breeding season to attract a mate. The beak is small, conical, and pink for most of the year, but turns bright orange with the spring molt in both sexes. The American goldfinch undergoes a molt in the spring and autumn. It is the only finch to undergo molting twice a year. During the winter molt it sheds all its feathers; in the spring, it sheds all but the wing and tail feathers, which are dark brown in the female and black in the male. The markings on these feathers remain through each molt, with bars on the wings and white under and at the edges of the short, notched tail. The sexual dimorphism displayed in plumage coloration is especially pronounced after the spring molt, when the bright color of the male's summer plumage is needed to attract a mate. In our area, we only get them in the winter, but the males will start to molt into the breeding plumage before they leave looking pretty blotchy. The brilliant lemon yellow is a color produced by carotenoid pigments from plant materials in their diet.

Goldfinch are seed eaters. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the species is one of the strictest vegetarians in the bird world. They are mainly granivorous, but will occasionally eat insects, which are also fed to their young to provide protein. Their diet consists of the seeds from a wide variety of plants. The American Goldfinch uses its feet extensively in feeding, even feeding upside down! They have adapted to being able to remove the seeds from weeds, grasses, thistle, teasel, dandelion, ragweed, mullein, cosmos, goatsbeard, sunflower, and alder. They also consume tree buds, maple sap, and berries. They

Tweet of the Month (cont.)

will readily feed at backyard feeding stations. There is even a special feeder designed just for them! Tiny slits for seed ports that will allow only Goldfinch and Pine Siskins to extract the tiny thistle seeds. (Thistle is also known as Nyjer/Niger as there is a bad connotation of “thistle” being a “weed” by humans even though it is a totally different seed.) They also will eat sunflower seeds and safflower seeds.

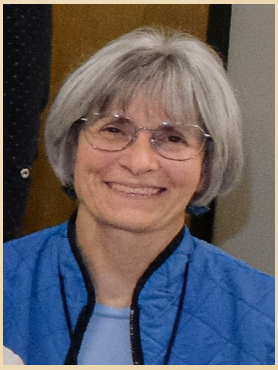
The American Goldfinch is the state bird of Iowa, New Jersey, and Washington. The Goldfinch breeds in the Midwest, east upwards into Canada. The breeding season begins later in the year than for any other finch and later than any other native North American bird, usually in July. This may be related to the abundance of seeds in the late summer months, as seeds represent most of their diet. They use the spent fluff from cat tails, milkweed, and thistle to line their nests, which may also be a reason for the late nesting.

Goldfinch are flocking birds. Sometimes well over 100 in a flock! Over 25 years ago, Goldfinch could be expected to migrate to our area by Halloween. Now it is between Christmas and New Years before they show at our feeders. Could this be because of global warming? More people putting up feeders in the north? Only the birds know, and they aren’t telling us!

Photos by Tammie Walters

This Month's Contributors

Gale Bacon

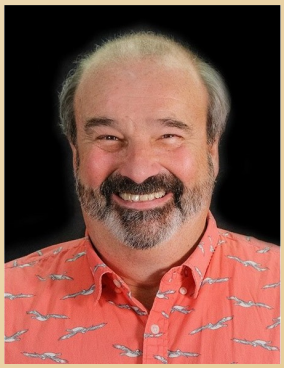


Becky Bertoni

Marilyn Blanton

Pat Bragg

Jerry Hamby



Dave Jones

Scott Kiester

Tom Kirwan

Bryan Lewis

Brenda Martin

Abigail Miller

Mary Morrow

Jonathan Reynolds

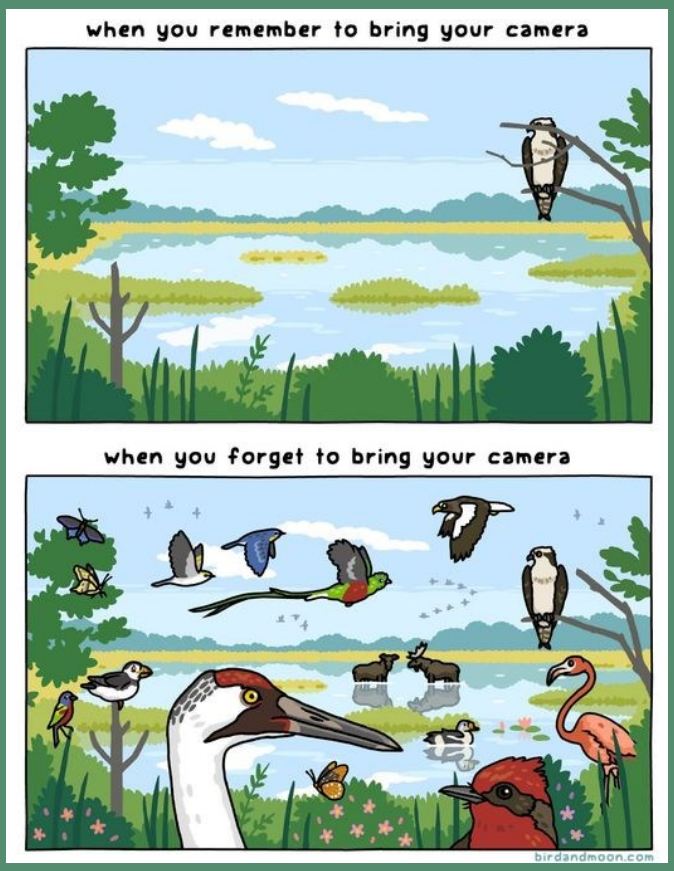
Fran Witte

Sue Yost

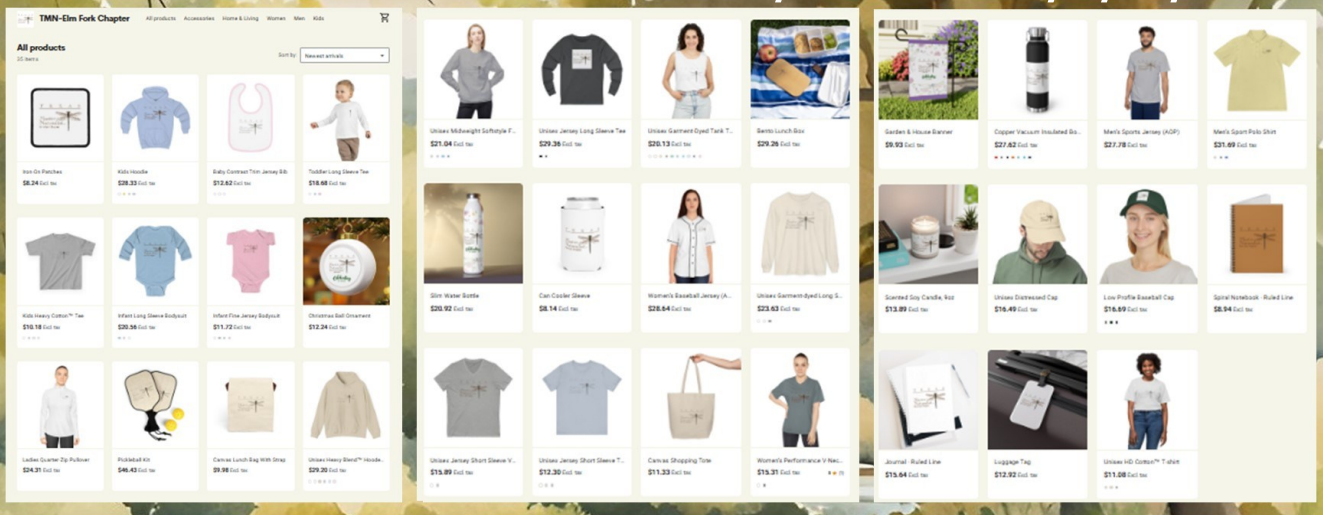
And a big thanks to Karen DeVinney and Mary Morrow for proofing!

Almost the Last Word

Funny Finds From Sue Yost!



Remember to visit the Elm Fork Chapter's online pop-up store



New items

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.

Stream The Naturalist News

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 socialmediateam@efctmn.org

Another great find from Sue Yost!

Some idioms related to the word "Birds"

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush: It's better to be content with what you have than to risk losing it all.

Birds of a feather flock together: People with similar interests tend to spend time together.

The early bird gets the worm: It's better to do something right away or before someone else does it.

A bird's-eye view: To see something from a high place or above it.

As the Crow flies: The distance between two places in a straight line.

As free as a bird: To be free to do what you want without any worries.

As light as a feather: To weigh very little.

To fly the coop: To escape.

To feather your nest: To make money, usually illegally and at someone else's expense.

In fine feather: To be in good spirits.

Eat like a bird: To always eat a small amount of food.

A little bird told me: Someone told me something but I'm not going to reveal who that person was.

An ugly duckling: A person who turns out to be pretty or talented against expectations.

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

April 2025 submissions are due by:

Monday, April 7th

Tammie Walters, Editor

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

Who We Are

Texas Master Naturalist–Elm Fork Chapter
https://txmn.org/elmfork/

OFFICERS

President – Bryan Lewis
Vice President – Brenda Martin
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 - Debbie Nobles

CHAPTER ADVISORS

AgriLife – Erin Smith
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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