

T E X A S



Naturalist News

January 2026 Volume 26, Issue 1



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On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/



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Naturalist News



Don't have time to read this month's issue of Naturalist News? Then click the box below to Stream our newsletter in audio format, featuring the voice of Teri Schnaubelt.



On the Cover:

Barred Owl at CCNHC,
by Clay Thurmond

(See Sue's Tweet on page 20!)

**Happy
New
Year!**



Elm Fork Trinity River at the Ray Roberts Greenbelt Trailhead, by Marissa Shaw

Announcements



Chapter Meeting Bylaws Adoption

Our Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter (TMN-EFC) governing documents are being revised early in 2026. These include our Bylaws, Chapter Management & Operating Protocols, Chapter Operating Handbook (COH), and Code of Ethics & Standards of Conduct.

Please attend our chapter meeting on January 15th, at 9:30 am, in the 2020 Room of the Denton County Administrative Courthouse to learn more and to approve our adoption of the revised TMN Chapter Bylaws.

Redline and clean versions of the Bylaws, CMOP & COH are available on the state TMN website, and our state leaders describe the changes to these documents in the December 2025 TMN-Tuesdays webinar. Both links are below. Please use VMS code “Chapter Administration/State Program Office” to record your volunteer service studying these changes, if you choose to do that, and record Advanced Training as “AT:TMN-Tuesday” if you watched the webinar by December 31st, 2025.

Pathway to the redline and clean versions of the documents:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/blog/governing-documents-adoption-process-2026/>

Link to the December TMN-Tuesday Webinar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e2eeom-IMQ>



Announcements

Green Acres iNaturalist Pollinator Photography Exhibit

All ages welcome to explore



Feb 1 - Mar 15, 2026
Flower Mound Public Library

3030 Broadmoor Ln., Flower Mound, TX 75022

Visitors can view 35 iNaturalist photos of pollinators at Green Acres, taken by local photographers during the day and at night with black-lighting. There's an opportunity to vote for a favorite photo.

This exhibit is funded by the H-E-B grant, Green Acres is the Place to BEE.

Announcements



1951 S Valley Parkway, Lewisville

Thrive Nature Park Nature Hike

Join us for a morning of
exploration and connection!

Link to register found on the City of Lewisville Parks and Rec Dept Events

Third Sunday from
September to May

9 AM at the Picnic Table at the
S Valley Parkway Crosswalk

Contact Chris Chastain at cchastain@cityoflewisville.com for more information.

*Don't miss this wonderful
video, produced by
Rob Hull, class of 2025,
that shows just how
awesome our organization
is!*

*Click anywhere on the image,
or here to view: [Volunteer](#)*



Volunteer



Texas Master Naturalists Elm Fork Chapter
166 subscribers

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Awards and Recognition

December 2025

Initial Certifications

Pam Golcher Beirute	Class of 2025
Steven Hadidi	Class of 2025
Tom Hudiburgh	Class of 2025
Bridget Miller	Class of 2025



2025 Recertifications

Craig Blow	Class of 2019
John Bodnar	Class of 2007
Lori Carroll	Class of 2021
Stephen Carroll	Class of 2021
Stephanie Durbin	Class of 2021
Sheri Fenter	Class of 2015
Brandy Gibson	Class of 2023
Bethany Griffin-Loftis	Class of 2022
Wylie Harris	Class of 2023
Jan Hodson	Class of 2002
Richard Johnson	Class of 2009
Dawn Marter	Class of 2023
Missy McCormick	Class of 2019
Jonathan Smith	Class of 2013
Dawn Tallman	Class of 2019
Barbie Van Order	Class of 2023
Shaleen Wunrow	Class of 2021



Awards and Recognition

December 2025



250 Hour Milestone

Delia Croessmann

Class of 2021



2500 Hour Milestone

Sandy LaQuey

Class of 2019

9000 Hour Milestone

Mary Morrow

Class of 2014



Congratulations!

Field Notes in Focus



North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*), by Clay Thurmond

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training

FM Wild- Install a Rain Barrel

Saturday, February 7th
12:00 PM–2:00 PM

Green Acres Farm Memorial Park
4400 Hide-A-Way Lane, Flower Mound, 75022

This is part of the H-E-B Pollinators for Texas 2025 Green Acres is the Place to Bee project! We will be adding another good water source at Green Acres.

Sue Hudiburgh and Kim Wootten, two Master Naturalist/ Master Gardeners with advanced training in rainwater harvesting, will demonstrate the steps to add a rain barrel onto your home or shed. Participants will have the opportunity to see how it is installed in a rain collection system on a shed at Green Acres Farm Memorial Park.

[Click HERE to register.](#)



Volunteer Opportunities

Immediate Changes in Johnson Branch Nature Center Schedule

TPWD is making changes immediately in how the Nature Center at Johnson Branch is staffed. Their vision is to have the Nature Center at JB open daily.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday shifts will be covered by designated Park Hosts or park volunteers. This will ensure these "priority days," when more visitors are there, will be completely covered.

TMN volunteers will be able to volunteer Monday through Thursday for all or part of the day according to the volunteer's availability or desires. I see this as a positive change in our efforts to educate visitors about Nature. Changes have already been made to the calendar and sign up dates are available through March of 2026.

Please take time to sign up now. We can't do it without you.



Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunities

Greenbelt General Maintenance and Natural Resource Volunteers Needed

The Staff of the Greenbelt Unit of Ray Roberts Lake State Park serve as the management team for the Greenbelt and the Natural Resource team for the Ray Roberts Complex. We are looking for general maintenance and natural resource volunteers to assist us in maintaining the Greenbelt and conserve the natural resources of Ray Roberts.

General Maintenance Volunteers have multiple opportunities to volunteer at the park based on their areas of interest and the park's operational needs. Opportunities include but are not limited to a variety of maintenance tasks, special projects, and customer-related opportunities.

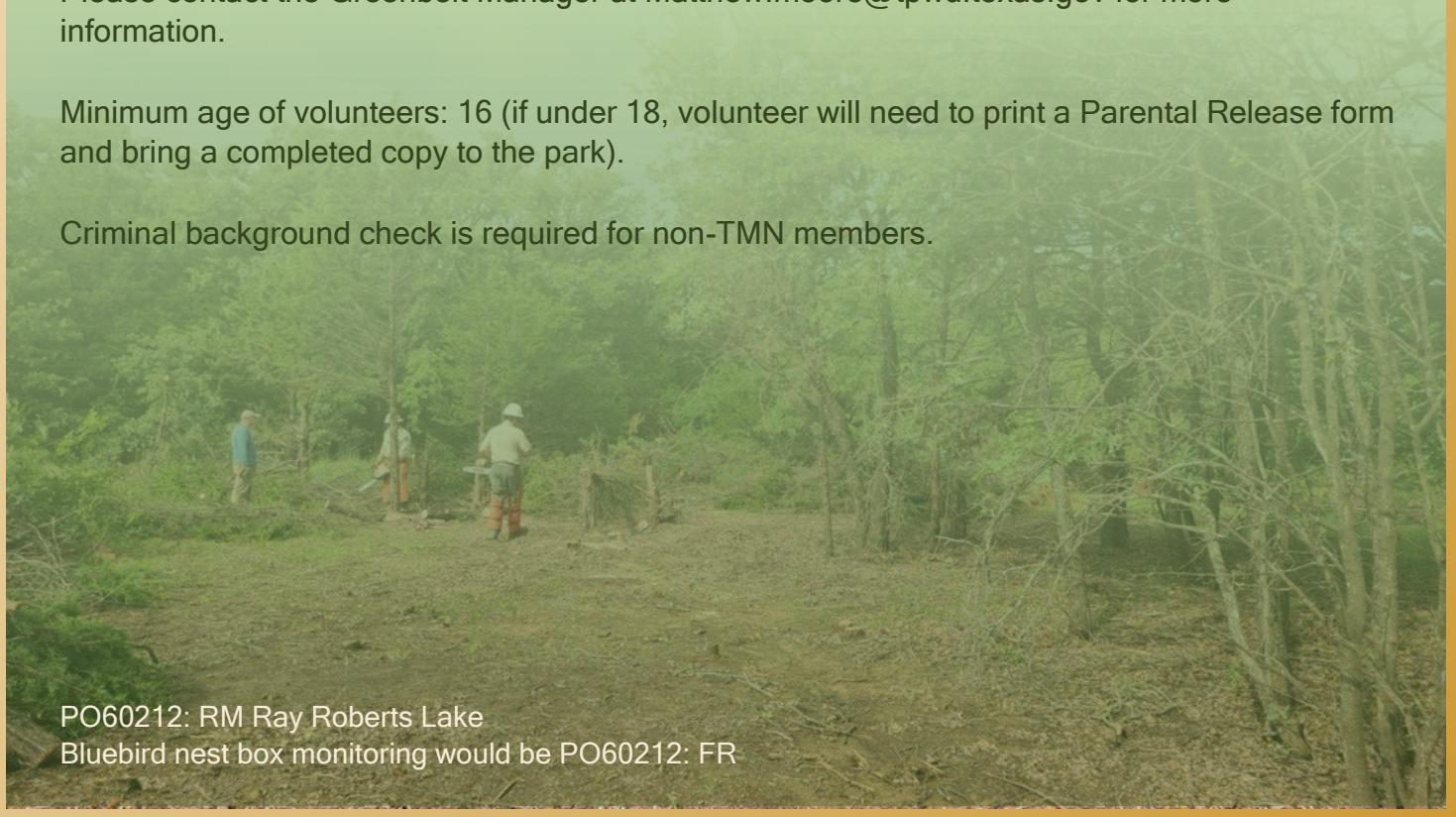
Natural Resource Volunteer projects could include bluebird box monitoring, fire break prep, invasive management & habitat restoration.

This opportunity is available year-round and provides a flexible schedule. No minimum hours/week are required. This volunteer opportunity does not include a campsite.

Please contact the Greenbelt Manager at Matthew.moore@tpwd.texas.gov for more information.

Minimum age of volunteers: 16 (if under 18, volunteer will need to print a Parental Release form and bring a completed copy to the park).

Criminal background check is required for non-TMN members.



PO60212: RM Ray Roberts Lake
Bluebird nest box monitoring would be PO60212: FR

Inside Outside News

Volunteer and AT Opportunities



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!*

TEXAS
Master Naturalist

Elm Fork Chapter

TEXAS A&M EXTENSION TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Home About Join Our Chapter Photo Gallery Activities Newsletters Calendar Members Area Donate

References

Today < > January 2026

14 JAN, WED	9am – 12pm	Beulah Acres Agroforest Workday 7801 S I-35E, Corinth, TX 76208, USA
	9am – 12pm	LLELA Wednesday Work Crew
	10am – 4pm	Ray Roberts Lake State Park Nature Center - Johnson Branch Unit Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branc...
15 JAN, THU	9am – 12pm	Chapter Meeting Denton County Administrative Courthouse, 1 Courthouse Dr, Denton, TX 76208, USA
	10am – 4pm	Ray Roberts Lake State Park Nature Center - Johnson Branch Unit Ray Roberts Lake State Park - Johnson Branc...
	12 – 1pm	AT - Advancing Trails Webinar Series
16 JAN, FRI	10am – 4pm	Ray Roberts Lake State Park Nature Center - Isle Du Bois Unit Ray Roberts Lake State Park Isle du Bois, 100 P W ...
17 JAN, SAT	8 – 10am	Thrive Nature Park-Invasive Species Removal Thrive Nature Park, 1951 S Valley Pkwy, Lewisville, TX 75067, USA
	9:30am – 4pm	AT - Getting to Your Roots: The Soil Food Web (Friends of LLELA presentation) Thrive, 1950 S Valley Pkwy, Lewis...
	10am – 4pm	Ray Roberts Lake State Park Nature Center - Isle Du Bois Unit Ray Roberts Lake State Park Isle du Bois, 100 P W ...
18 JAN, SUN	9 – 10:30am	3rd Sundays Nature Walk @ Thrive Thrive Nature Park, 1951 S Valley Pkwy, Lewisville, TX 75067, USA
	10am – 4pm	Ray Roberts Lake State Park Nature Center - Isle Du Bois Unit Ray Roberts Lake State Park Isle du Bois, 100 P W ...
19 JAN, MON	All day	Martin Luther King Jr. Day

calendar@efctmn.org

Events shown in time zone: (GMT-06:00) Central Time - Chicago

Google Calendar

Projects in the Community

LLELA's Christmas at the Cabin Event Was a Fun Time for All!



Photos by Barbara Hibberd,
Texas Master Naturalist, Blackland Prairie Chapter

Wild About LLELA

Sue Yost, class of 2017

Oh DEER! At LLELA that would mean White-tailed Deer!

Texas is home to, by far, the most individual White-tailed Deer of all U.S. states, Canadian provinces, or Latin American countries, with an estimated population of 5.3 million, with both wild

deer and farmed herds, the latter raised for large rack size and breeding. There are nice size herds of deer at LLELA.



There is a small herd aptly named the Virginia bunch that hang out around the gatehouse. They also can be seen feeding on the fresh grasses on the dam. A herd is also seen frequently around the classroom and greenhouse.

Deer tracks are one of the easier tracks to identify and can be found on most of the LLELA trails. The scat can be discovered in the pollinator garden or in the grassy area around the Cicada pavilion, but you must search for it.



Continued on next page...



Wild About LLELA (cont.)

Does had a very good reproductive year this spring. Several fawns were heard and spotted around the classroom hiding in the tall grasses in late May. Momma told them to stay put and they did till she came back and got them. One was found resting in the pollinator garden close to where we were having a class. Momma appeared from the woods ready to retrieve the fawn but was too cautious of our presence. I moved the kids to a different area and when we returned the fawn was gone.

There is no hunting at LLELA so the deer know they are safe, except for the predatory coyotes and bobcats. There are plenty of nuts, acorns, berries and grasses for them to eat making LLELA a great wild place to live.

Get WILD at LLELA in the early morning hours (they open at 7:00 am) and look for deer. Guaranteed they will see you before you see them!



Photo credits: Sue Yost; taken at LLELA.



Features

Into the Woods

By Marilyn Blanton

Among the shadows, dark and deep
Into the woods, I slowly creep

As if the very trees might fall
Grand old trees, lofty and tall

Scattered light falls through shades of green
Where little squirrels play and lovely birds sing

I wonder what secrets the old trees know?
How many years did it take them to grow?

All through the year the trees stand tall
All through the winter, spring, summer and fall

In the spring, with new leaves of green
A wondrous sight awaits to be seen

Through the long days of summer, the leaves give their shade
Offering solace and refuge amid the woodland glade

Then in the fall, glorious colors appear
Hues of scarlet and amber draw one near

Followed by winter, when the old trees rest
A time when their shapes are seen the best

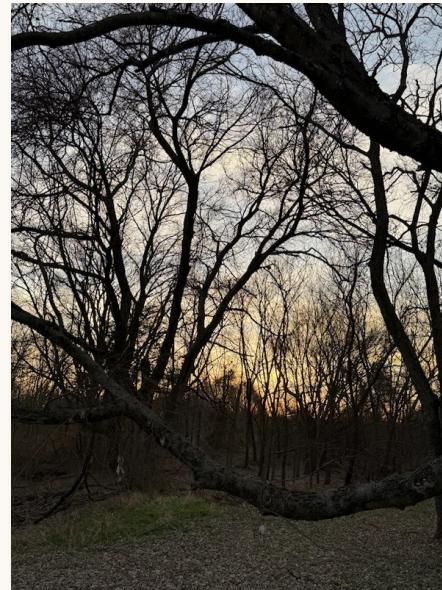
Some are gnarled and twisted, others arching or straight
While lingering through winter, for spring they wait

Making patterns like lace against a cold winter sky
The time of rebirth is drawing nigh

The woods have a grandeur through the cycle of seasons
A place of purpose and hope for so many reasons

I can't resist the lure of the woods
Where for so long the old trees have stood

May the woods live forever in peace and grace
Making God's world a more beautiful place



Features

From Classroom to Coastal Prairie—The Search for Chocolate Bay

By Jerry Hamby

Late in my teaching career, I took a group of students to Lawther-Deer Park Prairie, a 51-acre site 20 miles southeast of Houston, Texas. It was not our first field trip that semester, but it was the only time I ever led one spontaneously. Earlier in the day, the students had made academic presentations for an undergraduate research conference. Because this “platinum prairie” was a five-minute drive from San Jacinto College, the conference site, I could not resist making the pilgrimage.

Dressed in professional attire, we walked down a mowed path to a viewing platform, and at the top of the stairs, we stood above a coastal prairie remnant that had never been plowed and, therefore, looked the way it did when settlers arrived in the nineteenth century. More importantly, it was still teeming with more than 300 species of native plants. The pristine prairie was surrounded in every direction by suburban development—residential neighborhoods, an elementary school, and a cemetery. It is a testament to the determination and fundraising efforts of local activists, the Native Prairies Association of Texas (which owns the land), and Bayou Land Conservancy (which holds a conservation easement) that this site was saved from development. On that autumn afternoon, my students and I encountered something truly rare—part of the one percent of native prairies that still exist in Texas.



Students at Lawther-Deer Park Prairie, 2017

From the first semester I taught freshman composition, my students read and wrote about their connection to physical places—describing them, responding to them emotionally, and recounting their stories. Through the Texas Master Naturalist Program, I later learned about the complex nature of ecosystems and the impact of habitat loss. To make the implications more tangible to my students, I organized field trips to natural areas such as Sheldon Lake State Park & Environmental Learning Center, where staff and volunteers had been restoring the tallgrass prairie since 2003. I also encouraged students to participate in planting events at Sheldon Lake and Armand Bayou Nature Center. At this point I had been teaching at Lee College for 25 years.

My career entered a new phase in 2015 when I began teaching an Honors course called *The Human Condition* that linked composition and humanities classes. For the fall semester, my teaching partner Georgeann Ward and I developed a thematic unit that asked the question “how do we connect with nature?” In addition to studying literature and a film, we read nonfiction “lens” essays to provide analytical context.

Two short stories we studied were written by Baytown native Glenn Blake. “Chocolate Bay” is set five miles from campus in the former Brownwood subdivision of Baytown and takes place not long before utilities to the neighborhood were permanently cut off and the area was deemed uninhabitable. After almost a century of subsidence—soil compaction and elevation loss caused by groundwater extraction—residents were forced to abandon their homes. Blake’s story examines the human cost of living in such a dangerous area, resulting in the presumed death of a couple’s young son.

Ahead of discussing “Chocolate Bay,” a fictitious name for the three bays that surround what is now the Baytown Nature Center, Georgeann and I provided historical and environmental background. Brownwood sat



From Classroom to Coastal Prairie—The Search for Chocolate Bay (cont.)



Crystal Bay, Baytown Nature Center
(photo by Susan Hamby)



Wetland Channel,
Baytown Nature Center



Brownwood Marsh Educational Pavilion



Tracey's Seine Sampling Boardwalk,
BNC (photo by Susan Hamby)

on a 500-acre peninsula along Buffalo Bayou, which contains the Houston Ship Channel and flows into Galveston Bay. Surrounded by three bays—Burnet, Crystal, and Scott—Brownwood has a storied past, beginning with the building of stately homes for Humble Oil executives who lived there in the 1940s and ending in 1983 with the devastation caused by Hurricane Alicia (and a ten-foot storm surge). In addition to dropping ten feet in elevation, the peninsula had been left more vulnerable by the disappearance of a land barrier that wrapped around Crystal Bay.

After FEMA condemned Brownwood and most of the 400 homes were bought out, the area was transformed into the Baytown Nature Center (BNC). Funding from local bonds and a Superfund consortium paid for the Brownwood Marsh Restoration Project. In 1994, after razing the remaining houses and removing debris, work crews dug three 60-foot-wide channels through the property to provide a tidal exchange and to create “edge” habitats for aquatic wildlife and birds. Native plants—primarily cordgrasses (Genus *Sporobolus*), sedges (Family Cyperaceae), and wiregrasses (Genus *Aristida*)—were also installed. In addition, four freshwater ponds were excavated while other areas were elevated. Bottomland trees and shrubs were planted to attract indigenous mammals, reptiles, and birds. The Center opened to the public in 1998.

After learning about the history of Brownwood and the Baytown Nature Center, our students were ready to explore in person. BNC Naturalist Christina Butcher met us at the Brownwood Marsh Educational Pavilion, the highest point on the property, to provide visual orientation. We then visited several natural areas, including a boardwalk that cuts through a wetland area and a rookery that attracts egrets and herons (Family Ardeidae). Since the Center was created, more than 300 species of resident and migratory birds have been observed there.

We also discovered telltale signs of Brownwood, including house foundations, boat slips, and utility poles. Along the shore of Burnet Bay, we found a swimming pool three feet from the water’s edge with the land around it dissolved into the bay. These modern ruins provide a historical record of the former community and remind visitors of the fragile state of the ecosystem.

As we walked along the shoreline, particularly on Crystal and Scott Bays,



Swimming pool on Burnet Bay
(photo by Susan Hamby)



From Classroom to Coastal Prairie—The Search for Chocolate Bay (cont.)

we discovered riprap (large chunks of concrete), placed there to slow erosion. Wooster Point, which separates the two bays, has a particularly poignant history. Just beyond the riprap, now completely underwater, was Wooster Family Cemetery. As subsidence claimed the land, a few graves and headstones were relocated, leaving approximately ten graves behind, most of them dating from the 1890s to the 1920s.

Like Drew, the protagonist of “Chocolate Bay,” who wanders through the ruins of Brownwood, our students looked for signs of its former inhabitants. On the shore we found broken crockery and bricks tumbling among the oyster shells; these middens are the last signs of the Karankawa people who populated the Gulf Coast for thousands of years. Looking across the Ship Channel from almost any vantage point, we could see the San Jacinto Monument. The 567-foot column commemorates Sam Houston’s defeat of the Mexican army on April 21, 1836, and provides another reminder of how much the landscape has changed.

The San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site figures prominently in the other Glenn Blake story we studied, “Degüello.” The plot follows an unnamed narrator who has flown from Baltimore to Houston. Taking a taxi from Hobby Airport, he arrives at the Battleground at 2:00 a.m. When the driver refuses to venture down a flooded park road, the narrator removes his shoes and strikes out on foot.

At dawn he takes the Lynchburg Ferry across the Houston Ship Channel, but before stepping ashore, he sees an ominous sign, the fire of a flare stack, one of the dozens that burn off excessive gas from the refineries up and down the Ship Channel. The narrator’s ultimate destination is Brownwood, where he grew up. The ferryman warns him, “If I was you, I’d start worrying about what’s waiting for me on the other side.” Undeterred, the narrator sets off to an unknown fate.

The last year I taught at Lee College, our class retraced the narrator’s steps. Before doing so, Georgeann and I met Tom Solomon, a member of the Galveston Bay Chapter of TMN, for a tour of the prairie he helped restore. For more than twenty years, Tom has collected, germinated, and planted native seeds for several restoration projects in Southeast Texas. He is the person who introduced me to Lawther-Deer Park Prairie in 2016. He is also one of the most accomplished members of TMN, having accrued 35,000 volunteer service hours, more than any other member of the program. At the Battleground site, Tom led us through Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), and eastern gammagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), giving us a sense of what the prairie looked like in 1836.

When we took our students to the Battleground, we also made a brief stop at Habermehl Cemetery, 200 yards west of the monument, a small burial site for the family that occupied the property when it was



Riprap and overturned boat,
Wooster Point



Scott Bay, Baytown Nature Center



Tom Solomon and Georgeann Ward,
San Jacinto Battleground



Restored prairie,
San Jacinto Battleground



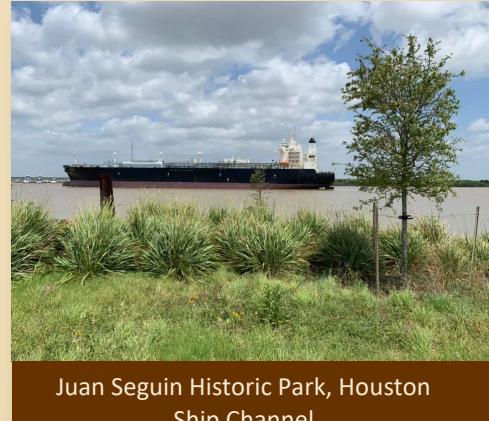
From Classroom to Coastal Prairie—The Search for Chocolate Bay (cont.)



Habermehl Family Cemetery,
San Jacinto Battleground

purchased by the state. Along the way we spotted slender rosinweed (*Silphium gracile*) and pitcher's leatherflower (*Clematis pitcheri*) dotting the prairie in yellow and purple, and a flock of American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) passed overhead. These were signs of a native ecosystem reclaiming the space.

After making a loop through the restored prairie, we drove to nearby Juan Seguin Historic Park, which is located at the junction of the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou, where we ate a picnic lunch. From there we drove onto the Lynchburg Ferry, and after crossing the Houston Ship Channel, drove to the Baytown Nature Center. It was the last time I visited the site.



Juan Seguin Historic Park, Houston
Ship Channel



Crow Road, Baytown Nature Center

As in previous years, we toured restored wetlands as well as the ruins of Brownwood, but this time Christina also led us to a property belonging to a former resident who refused to sell the land in the 1990s. In addition to piles of bricks and roof shingles, we found the skeletal remains of a backyard pergola with a view to the bay unobstructed by other houses.

After hiking to the Scott Bay Outlook, we reached the eastern edge of the Nature Center. On the other side of a chainlink fence were houses that survived Hurricane Alicia in 1983. Though no longer called Brownwood, the neighborhood retains the original street names—Crow Road, Cabaniss Avenue, and Brownwood Drive. On our side of the fence, the roads disappeared into the wild.

The rate of subsidence that destroyed Brownwood has slowed in the last forty years, but the dangers to life and property still exist. Between 1906 and 2006, land subsidence in Harris and Galveston Counties ranged from one to ten feet with areas near the Houston Ship Channel averaging eight to ten feet. At the San Jacinto Battleground alone, more than 100 acres of land have disappeared into Galveston Bay.

The areas most affected are those dominated by industry, particularly oil and gas production. The problems are being addressed by the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District, which has worked with industries and municipalities since 1975 to restrict groundwater removal and to convert to the use of surface water. However, with continued population growth and development, residents of the Texas coast will continue to face the challenges caused by subsidence.



Cabaniss Avenue disappearing
into the wild

Tweet of the Month

From Sue Yost, class of 2017

"Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?" If you are in a largely old deciduous and mixed forest then it would be the Barred Owl doing the "cooking." But Barred Owls are not confined to extensive forest, also dwelling in semi-open wooded areas, locally in large parks with mature trees, and in forest-adjacent regions recently logged. Recent studies show that even suburban neighborhoods can be ideal habitat for barred owls.



Barred Owls, named for the horizontal barring on their underside, are common large owls found here in Texas. They are secondary cavity nesters, meaning if there is not a tree hollow or snag they will nest in a nest box specifically designed for an owl of that size. If a nesting cavity is not available, this species will also use other large birds' nests and occasionally also the dreys of squirrels.



Barred Owls tend to pair bond for life and will continue to use the same nesting sites. Copulation between pairs usually occurs in late winter, February to March, and occurs several times, probably to ensure implantation. Vocalization of early morning duets between the pairs can be heard now. The female lays 2 to 3 eggs. She alone incubates, doing so for about 28 days, while the male gathers food for her.

During the first three

weeks after the offspring hatch, the male does all prey deliveries, either bringing prey directly into the nest or leaving it for the female at the nest entrance or on a nearby branch. After that time, both parents will bring in the food. Fledging occurs at about 36-39 days. Nesting Barred Owls have a very strong reaction to human disturbance. They do not like it and will attack humans near the nest or fledglings, so be aware if you have one nesting on your property.



Now about that food. Owls are silent predators with extraordinary hearing and eyesight. Barred Owls are opportunistic predators of the woodlands. They usually hunt from a perch. During hunting efforts, they glide briefly from perch to perch until prey is detected. Like all owls, the Barred Owl has incredibly large eyes that capture as much light as possible, allowing for better night vision.

Due to its relatively modest foot size, it does not usually take particularly large prey. However, owls in general have proportionately larger feet and more powerful grips than similarly sized diurnal raptors, while the physiology of the daytime raptors differs. While the mechanisms of the killing feet overlap, owls kill mainly with constriction and sacrifice velocity with their physiology while diurnal raptors have higher



Barred Owl (cont.)

velocity and kill mainly by trauma inflicted by their enlarged talons. Most of the prey of Barred Owls is eaten outright but, with large prey, the owl may eat the head first and then return to consume the remainder of the body. Their diet consists of small mammals (rabbits, rodents, etc.), roosting birds, amphibians, and occasionally reptiles and fish. For an owl its size, it also consumes a large amount of arthropods and other invertebrates.

The Great Horned Owl is the greatest natural enemy of the Barred Owl. Great Horned Owls prey on nestlings, fledglings and adults. Other predators include nest raiding by raccoons, plus American marten and the fisher which we do not have in our area.

The Barred Owl is a naturally long-living bird. The oldest wild bird on record is 24 years. The Barred Owl is one of the most common owls in North America. Partners in Flight estimates that the Barred Owl may number up to 3 million individuals globally, making it, perhaps, the second most numerous North American owl behind the Great Horned Owl and perhaps slightly ahead of other common species like the Barn Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Barred Owls are thought to be partly responsible for the recent decline of the Northern Spotted Owl, native to British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California. The 2011 Revised Recovery Plan for the Northern Spotted Owl states "Based on the best available scientific information, competition from the Barred Owl poses a significant and complex threat to the spotted owl." Northern Spotted Owls were thought to be already declining considerably before Barred Owls moved into their range, mostly in sync with large-scale logging operations and land development carried out by humans, with their problems now further exacerbated by the barred species's presence. There is currently much controversy about eliminating hundreds of Barred Owls in the Spotted Owls' territories in the northwest.

Who's doing the cooking tonight in your woods? Listen to the silence of the night and you may just hear the duet mnemonic "who cooks for you....who cooks for you all." The Barred Owl making its presence known to all those who venture out into the darkness.



iulian_ursache, Pixabay

Credits

Photos: Wikipedia, Etsy, TMN. Pixabay

Text: Wikipedia

This Month's Contributors



Gale Bacon



Becky Bertoni



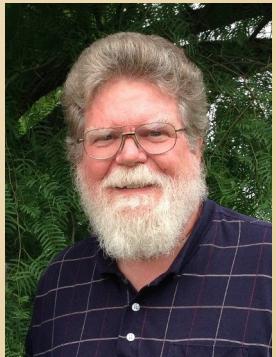
Marilyn Blanton



Pat Bragg



Jerry Hamby



Michael Hatch



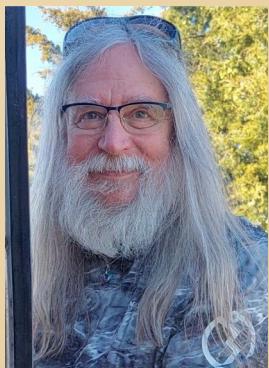
Bryan Lewis



Michele Rawleigh



Marissa Shaw



Clay Thurmond



Fran Witte



Sue Yost



Betty Zajac



Karen DeVinney



Mary Morrow

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

Tammie Walters,
Editor

Almost the Last Word

2026 ELM FORK CHAPTER TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST MEMBERSHIP DUES

It's time to start thinking about renewing your Elm Fork Chapter membership for 2026! A link to pay dues online will be available in the What's New? and Members Area of the website. (Or directly here: <https://txmn.org/elmfork/2026-dues/>)

Now through January 31, 2026, dues are \$25 (plus \$1.01 if paying online).

2025 Class Members DO NOT need to pay dues in 2026!

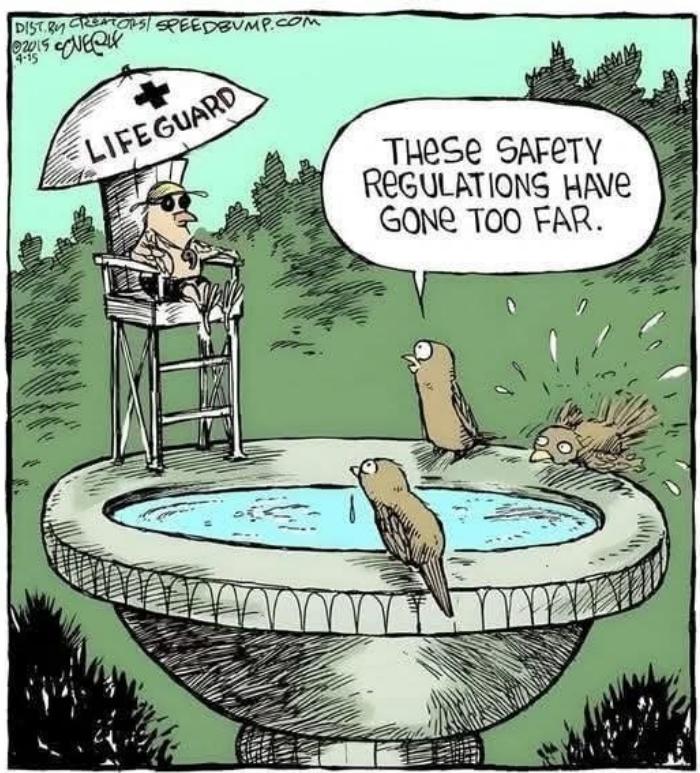
To avoid the online fee, you can send your \$25 check, made payable to Elm Fork Chapter, to:

Mike Hatch, EFCTMN Treasurer,
PO Box 1113
Gainesville, TX 76241.



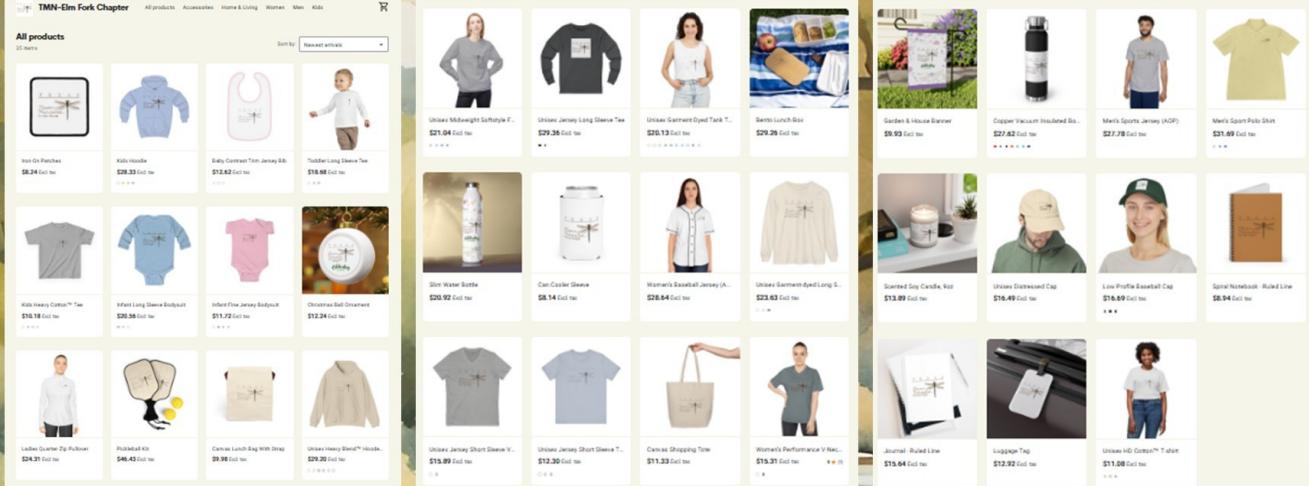
Mike will also be able to take your payment in person by cash, check or credit card at the chapter meetings in November and December.

Funny Finds From Sue Yost!



Almost the Last Word

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



*** New * items**

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





**WE ARE ON
INSTAGRAM!**

*Please follow us at
elmforkchaptternmn 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

Thank you all for your amazing articles and
photos for the

Naturalist News!

We couldn't do it without you!

Please send submissions to:
newsletter@efctmn.org

February 2026 submissions are due by:

Monday, February 9th



Who We Are

T E X A S



Texas Master Naturalist—Elm Fork Chapter

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

OFFICERS

President - Brenda Martin

Vice President - Sharon Betty

Treasurer - Ginny Richards

Secretary - Debbie Nobels

BOARD POSITIONS

Immediate Past President – Bryan Lewis

Member-at-Large – Rob Blake

BOARD DIRECTORS

Membership - Sharon Betty

VMS - Jim Gerber

Initial Training - Marissa Shaw

Communications - Susan Richmond

Volunteer Service Projects - Andrea Dixon

Advanced Training Programs - TBD

Outreach/Adult Education - Sue Ridnour

New Class Representative - Kevin Shaw

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.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is committed to participant accessibility and will provide reasonable accommodations. Please contact the Denton County AgriLife Office horticulture department at least 10 business days in advance of the program.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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