

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter



Naturalist News

June 2026 Volume 26, Issue 6



Bryan Lewis©

We're on the Web www.txmn.org/elmfork

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/

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Elm Fork Chapter



Naturalist News



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Editors:

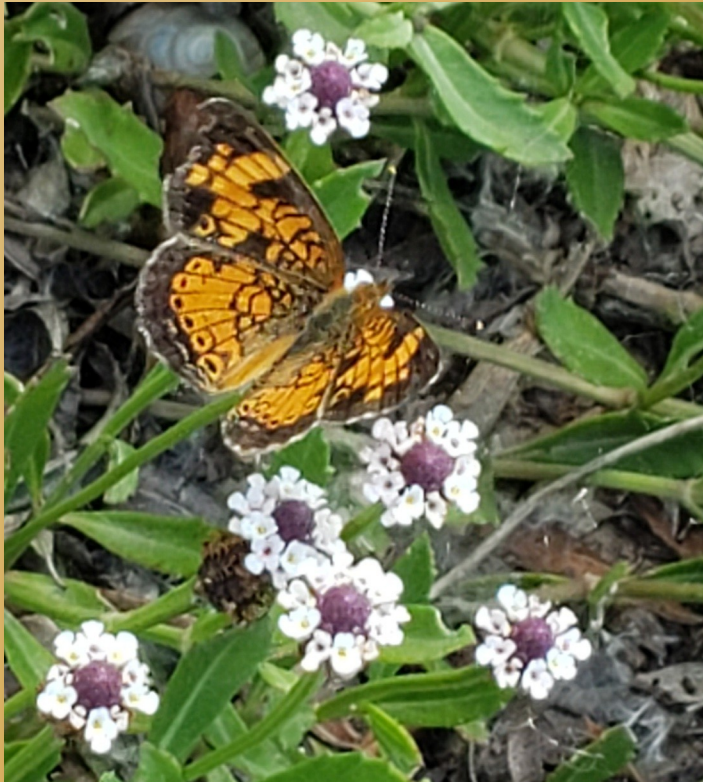
- Tammie Walters-Design
- Karen DeVinney
- Mary Morrow

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:

Cooper's Hawk (*Astur cooperii*),
by Bryan Lewis



Pearl crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*)
on frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*), by Tammie Walters

Announcements



Thursday, October 22nd thru
Sunday, October 25th

Texas Master Naturalist- Elm Fork Chapter Scholarships Allocated

15 Members @ \$100
 1 Certified Member @ \$500
 1 Initial Trainee @ \$500

* New *

Certified Members Submission Period
June 19th through 26th

Initial Trainees Submission Period
to be determined

Submissions will be via a form
on our Chapter Website

Check out [Podcast #25](#) featuring **Brenda Martin and Susan Richmond** sharing about **Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter.**



The Texas Master Naturalist
program is a partnership between



The Texas A&M AgriLife
Extension Service is an equal
opportunity employer and
program provider.

Announcements

Susan Richmond is at it again--look at these *GREAT* thank-you notes she created!

Send your thanks to those who are helping our efforts with these Texas Master Naturalist-Elm Fork Chapter thank-you note cards. They are available in the Resource Room.

The photo below is the standard small size, and there is a larger size available also.

Thank you, Susan!



*From,
Becky Bertoni*



The two-year impact report for the Constellation of Living Memorials project that was presented at the May chapter meeting is available here:

[CLM Two-Year Pilot Impact Report 2024-2025](#)

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

June Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, June 18th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Denton County Administrative Courthouse • 3rd Floor Conference Room
1 Courthouse Dr. • Denton, TX 76208

This Month's Presentation:

Listen Up! How You Can Be Involved in Environmental Due Diligence

By: Bethany Deitch
Environmental Analyst
Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc.

And: Audrey Haffner
Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc.

The presentation will cover due diligence processes within different environmental disciplines. Learn how you and others can get involved and understand what's happening around your home and across the State. Our speakers will review specific project examples and respond to questions about current industry trends.



Bethany Deitch offers four years of professional experience in environmental assessments in multiple industries and geographic locations. She performs regular field work, report and permit preparation, and agency coordination. Within Kimley-Horn, she manages the tree inventory and sampling practice and assists with stormwater consultation. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental geosciences with minors in meteorology and geographic information systems (GIS) from Texas A&M University.



Audrey Haffner is on the Power Delivery team at Kimley-Horn, where she brings experience in environmental assessments, agency coordination and public outreach. She has contributed to multiple CCN transmission line projects across Texas, supporting project development and stakeholder engagement efforts. Audrey is involved in outreach for students interested in environmental science in the Fort Worth area. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science and sustainability from Texas Christian University.



Upcoming Chapter Meetings

July Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, July 16th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Denton County Southwest Courthouse

6200 Canyon Falls Drive * Flower Mound, TX 76226

July's Presentation:

How to Build a Park: Palo Pinto Mountains State Park

By: Kate Fisher

Park Interpreter | Park Ranger

Palo Pinto Mountains State Park

Originally purchased in 2011, Palo Pinto Mountains has become the newest state park in Texas. But what goes into building a park? Come and hear from a ranger about the steps taken to balance outdoor recreation opportunities for Texans while also conserving wild spaces. From shielding starry skies to protecting historic waterways, this park will offer a natural sanctuary for generations to come.



Kate Fisher is a native Texan, born and raised in Fort Worth. Despite limited access to the outdoors growing up, her fascination for animals and the natural environment persisted from a young age. This quickly turned into a deep-seated passion for protecting wildlife and wild spaces, which took Kate to Tarleton State University to study wildlife biology. Having worked for the Corps of Engineers and Abilene State Park, Kate developed a love for interpretation to share the wonders of the outdoors with others. This brought her to Palo Pinto Mountains State Park, which sits halfway between two major metropolitan areas of Texas.

Kate is so excited to be a part of helping others discover the great outdoors! Whether she's teaching someone the history of the land, a weird animal fact, a new skill, or helping to create a more accessible experience, Kate strives to introduce the outdoors to others the same way that so many did for her—in a way that is memorable and welcoming.



Awards and Recognition

May 2026

Initial Certifications

Sherry Brott

Class of 2025



2026 Recertifications

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Sam Bufkins | Class of 2023 |
| Penny Cooley | Class of 2024 |
| Regina Dale | Class of 2019 |
| Jane Duke | Class of 2019 |
| Larry Duncan | Class of 2018 |
| Janet Gershenfeld | Class of 2005 |
| Marian Kester | Class of 2007 |
| Carl Malmberg | Class of 2021 |
| Vin Merrill | Class of 2011 |
| Debra Nobles | Class of 2024 |
| Sarah Pogue | Class of 2025 |
| Renee Province | Class of 2008 |
| Ginny Richards | Class of 2022 |
| Dave Rowley | Class of 2000 |
| Missy Strickland | Class of 2019 |
| Barb Van Order | Class of 2023 |
| Tammie Walters | Class of 2020 |
| LeeAnn Weaver | Class of 2004 |
| Lynn West | Class of 2023 |
| Fran Witte | Class of 2017 |



Awards and Recognition

May 2026



250 Hour Milestone

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Cynthia Pierce</i> | <i>Class of 2024</i> |
| <i>Teri Schnaubelt</i> | <i>Class of 2023</i> |
| <i>Barb Van Order</i> | <i>Class of 2023</i> |



500 Hour Milestone

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Nancy Blakney</i> | <i>Class of 2023</i> |
| <i>Amy Montgomery</i> | <i>Class of 2023</i> |
| <i>Kevin Shaw</i> | <i>Class of 2025</i> |



1000 Hour Milestone

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Susan Hamby</i> | <i>Class of 2022</i> |
| <i>Ginny Richards</i> | <i>Class of 2022</i> |



1500 Hour Milestone

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Carl Parsons</i> | <i>Class of 2023</i> |
|---------------------|----------------------|





2500 Hour Milestone

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Jane Duke</i> | <i>Class of 2009</i> |
|------------------|----------------------|



Awards and Recognition

May 2026

 *And last but not least...* 

9000 Hour Milestone

Scott Kiester

Class of 2003



*Congratulations
everyone!*

Field Notes in Focus



Birdfoot violet (*Viola pedata*), by Jonathan Reynolds

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training

Blacklight Mothing

Corinth Nature Preserve
3901 Corinth Pkwy.

Discover the nocturnal side of Corinth
July 11 | 8-11 p.m.



Spot moths, learn about insects, & log your finds at Corinth's FREE Blacklight Mothing event on July 11 from 8–11 p.m. at Corinth Nature Preserve in Corinth Community Park! All ages. DFW Urban Wildlife Biologist, Sam Kieschnick, will be on-site to lead our mothing activities!

Bring a filled water bottle and a flashlight (headlamp will do!).

FREE registration: <https://wkf.ms/4bxZL9c>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1HyA549eGW/>



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

- **Wednesday, July 15h, 6:30-7:30 p.m.**
 - * *Conservation Opportunity Areas in Texas*
 - * Jennifer Marrugo, Ecologist at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - Wildlife Division
 - * [Register](#)

Visit the [Texas Waters](#) webpage for information on becoming a certified [Texas Waters Specialist](#).

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

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

August 21, 2026 8am-3pm

Denton County Extension Office

611 Kimberly Dr
Denton, TX 76208



HABITAT *at* HOME

**Managing the land you have with
the wildlife you want**

\$35 - Early Registration (ends 7/21/26)

\$45 - Regular Registration

Lunch and all course materials included
with registration

Program Agenda

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 8-8:30am | Registration |
| 8:30-9am | Welcome & Introduction to Wildlife Management |
| 9-10am | Land Resource Inventory and Habitat Suitability Assessment |
| 10-10:15am | Break |
| 10:15-11am | Species at Scales: What Wildlife Can You Manage on Your Size Property? |
| 11-11:45am | Managing Wildlife Habitat Within Land-Use Restrictions |
| 11:45-12:15pm | Lunch (provided with registration) |
| 12:15-1pm | Choosing Scale-Appropriate Wildlife Management Practices |
| 1-2:30pm | Building Wildlife Management Plans |
| 2:30-3pm | Building Communities of Conservation |

Agenda and presentation titles subject to change

What is Habitat at Home?

This workshop guides landowners through managing wildlife habitat on your land - regardless of acreage. From home pollinator gardens to white-tailed deer management, this series focuses on identifying the right wildlife species for your property, building a wildlife management plan, & integrating your land-use goals with your wildlife management.

Register Online



<http://tx.ag/2026habitatathome>

For questions about the program or sponsorship opportunities, email:
chase.brooke@ag.tamu.edu

The 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.



Inside Outside News

Advanced Training

THE EXTRAORDINARY CATERPILLAR

WILD ONES DFW presents THE EXTRAORDINARY CATERPILLAR film and panel discussion with North Texas conservationists on

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

6:30 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.

Grapevine Palace Arts Center
300 S Main St, Grapevine, TX 76051

6:30 p.m. Meet & Greet

7:00 p.m. The Extraordinary Caterpillar

8:00 p.m. Panel Discussion



The Extraordinary Caterpillar invites viewers into the hidden world of nature's tiniest superheroes and the vital role they play in sustaining healthy ecosystems. Through stunning macro-videography and the insights of naturalists, scientists, and community advocates, the film reveals how caterpillars connect native plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife in an intricate food web. This captivating documentary encourages audiences to look more closely at the overlooked creatures in their own backyards and highlights why restoring native landscapes matters.

Afterwards, learn more during a 30-minute lively, knowledge-packed Q&A session with four outstanding local experts who are shaping conservation work right here in North Texas.

- **Sam Kieschnick**, Urban Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife
- **Jake Poinsett**, Education Manager, Trinity River Audubon Center
- **Carol Clark**, Conservation Specialist, Monarch Watch
- **Teddi Zonker**, VP, Wild Ones DFW: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes

Enjoy a rare chance to learn directly from these local leaders, ask your questions, and walk away inspired to make a difference.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear their insights, elevate your experience and spark new ideas.

REGISTER & ADD YOUR SEAT TODAY—RSVP REQUIRED

https://dfw.wildones.org/events/?wo_event_id=12284

Hosted by Wild Ones DFW: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes. We connect people and native plants for a healthy planet. Join us to celebrate biodiversity, ecological stewardship, and the power of native plants to support life.

Our Sponsors

Wild Ones DFW - <https://dfw.wildones.org/>

Homegrown National Park - <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

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 preparation, 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



Summer is in full swing at the park and nature center. We are really needing volunteers to host at the nature center during the week. If we are not there our beautiful nature center can't be utilized by the public. It is a great place for young and old to get in touch with nature. I will also add it is one of the few climate controlled projects TMN-EFC has. Please sign up through the chapter's calendar on SignUpGenius.

Also, Ranger Celia is looking for volunteers who would like to hold other events at the center or in the park. This is from Celia: "For summer programs, I am always looking for an extra set of hands as well. I spoke to Lin Hampton while she was here this past Saturday about hosting watercolors at JB in July. I would like to have others come out and host programs, like for a bioblitz or naturalist talk. I would like to add more options especially for our early risers."

If you would like to host a program or talk please contact Celia at (940) 783-6793 or through her email: Celia.Flores@tpwd.texas.gov

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 Elm Fork Chapter website with a calendar for June 2026. The calendar lists various activities and volunteer opportunities for each day of the month. Key events include:

- June 7:** Flag Day (10am Ray Roberts L)
- June 14:** Flag Day (10am Ray Roberts L)
- June 19:** Juneteenth (10am Ray Roberts L)
- June 20:** Juneteenth (10am Ray Roberts L)

Other activities listed include LLELA Monday, Clear Creek Wc, Ray Roberts L, Beulah Acres A, Green Acres Wk, LLELA Trailhea, Roots for Wk, AT - Watch, #TMN Tux, Board Meeti, AT - Texas Str, AT - Mothin, 2nd Saturday V, AT - Furneaux, Ray Roberts L, AT - Wildlife P, AT - Texas Meti, and AT - Bluebirds.

Projects in the Community

Denton Plant Rescue Project

Karen DeVinney, Class of 2021

We all probably realize that Texas Master Naturalist chapters are organized by ecoregions. Our particular chapter encompasses part of the Cross Timbers ecoregion, which stretches south from Kansas all the way to Central Texas, in finger-like strips running north and south. (For a wonderfully thorough exploration of the Cross Timbers, see Richard V. Francaviglia, *The Cast Iron Forest*.) It is the transitional area between the Eastern Deciduous Forest and the Great Plains, and it consists of types of plants from both of these ecoregions. This means that tallgrass prairie is as environmentally important to our chapter as stands of trees. If we as a chapter want to restore our ecological heritage, we need to work on both prairies and forests.



Jaime Baxter-Slye's students scoping out what plants to rescue on a site to be developed

This is especially vital if we are concerned about climate change. Tallgrass prairies can capture as much or more carbon as trees. They store between .3 and 1.7 metric tonnes of carbon per acre per year, whereas the number I encounter for an Eastern Deciduous Forest is more like 1 US ton per acre per year, depending on density and species (see TallgrassOntario.org). (A metric tonne = 2,204 pounds.) Native grasses are, in fact, preferable because they store the carbon in their roots, and a wildfire can't sweep through and send it back into the atmosphere, as it does with trees, which store carbon both above and below the ground (*Washington Post*, August 19, 2020).

The Elm Fork Chapter's Denton Plant Rescue Project tries to preserve some of the native prairie plants that are imminently threatened by development. I'd recommend that everyone look at the Native Plant Rescue Project's website: <https://www.nativeplantrescueproject.org/>. This program represents to me the ideal for which the Denton Plant Rescue is striving.

Here's how it works: When a property is scheduled for development (and we find out about it—you can help here!), we drive by and try to determine if the property contains plants of interest. It's important not to set foot on the property without landowner permission, so we try to do as much as possible from a car, public sidewalk or Google satellite images. The



Little bluestem
(*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Denton Plant Rescue Project (cont.)



Rescued plants from Dr. Jaime Baxter-Slye's site, to be relocated

Texas Master Naturalist Program frowns on someone who is acting as a Master Naturalist trespassing, which reflects poorly on the program and makes it more difficult to ask for buy-in from landowners. Getting permission is not a trivial task. Formulating a usable permission form took six months, a majority of the time needed to set up this project with the chapter! In many cases, during a drive by we can determine that the property has been disturbed and planted with imported grazing grasses, and thus not of interest to us. But sometimes there are fantastic native grasses and forbs, and that's when we try to get access to the property and set up a work day.

This brings up another obstacle to proceeding: the difficulty of identifying native plants in the winter or early spring when there are no recognizable blooms or even leaves, especially for a bird person like me! This is where I'm eternally grateful to Dr. Jaime Baxter-Slye for allowing our volunteers to come on her site and help dig plants and gather seeds for use in her Pollinative Prairie. Who knew what a purple three-awn grass looks like in late spring before it blooms? She did. And she's happy to teach us.

Using the Native Plant Rescue Project as a model, I've also learned that we don't want to reveal too much to the public about the locations where we'll be working. That group has had people show up to protest the development, which is disruptive and harmful to working with landowners in the future. Although it can be frustrating, private property ownership is fundamental in Texas.

So, after we've determined there are plants of interest, received written permission, and dug or harvested, what do we do? There are options:

- 1) Donate seeds to Emily Fowler's Seed Library, or another seed library that will distribute them to the public.
- 2) Take them home and add them to your own prairie or pollinator garden.
- 3) Plant them at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center as part of their prairie restoration.
- 4) You tell us! These plants and seeds will be available for anywhere in our chapter's area as long as they will be nurtured and you can promise to pay it forward with future seeds and propagated plants.

In all cases, we want to keep track of the provenance of the seeds or plants, with as many details about soil type and original location as possible.

This project has required hard work, but has been oh so satisfying. And now that it's up and running, I hope you can join us at our next rescue.



Topeka Purple Coneflower
(*Echinacea atrorubens*)

Projects in the Community

Progress on the H-E-B Green Acres is the Place to BEE Grant

By Becky Bertoni

The H-E-B Pollinator for Texas grant, Green Acres is the Place to BEE, is ending this July. We had a blacklighting evening on June 12 with Sam Kieschnick, our rain collection shed is being painted with a Green Acres species, we are planting and transplanting as the weather permits, and we are fighting the battle against non-native invasives!

All that we are doing is aimed at increasing native pollinators by planting native plants. We added lots of photos to iNaturalist during the April City Nature Challenge 2026—Brynne and Sue's photos show two.



Sand Chafer,
by Sue Ridnour



Toltec Potter Wasp,
by Brynne Bryan

In the photo of the rain collection shed on the right are two young volunteers that have returned to help out—Sam and Hannah with their grandma, Margaret, a community volunteer, and Monica, TMN-EFC. Our artist, Jenna, is a community volunteer. We have two 2026 trainees working with us now, Andrew and Emily. Malou and Nancy are longtime dedicated community volunteers. On the left in order: Hannah, Monica, Sam, Margaret, Jenna. In order on the right Malou, Andrew, Emily, Nancy.



May 26 crew by the rain collection shed—Texas spiny lizard on the door. From left to right: Hannah, Monica, Sam, Margaret, Jenna, Malou, Andrew, Emily, Nancy



Rain collection shed artwork as of June 3

Come and join us—Tuesdays, 8-11 am, at Green Acres Farm Memorial Park, 4400 Hide-A-Way Lane, Flower Mound 75022.

Wild About LLELA

Sue Yost, class of 2017



Sticks

Someone can stick it to you or (this is a) stick up. Sticks (and stones) can break your bones. Sticks also mean hockey, field, and lacrosse sticks. Chopsticks. Pick up sticks game. Stick shift. Part of a tree. Carrot/celery stick. Weather stick. Glue stick. Walking/hiking stick. Or at LLELA it means stick bug!

According to Wikipedia, "The Phasmatodea (also known as Phasmida or Phasmatoptera) is an order of insects whose members are variously known as stick insects, stick bugs, walking sticks, stick animals, or bug sticks. They are also occasionally referred to as Devil's darning needles, although this name is shared by both dragonflies and crane flies."

"Their natural camouflage makes them difficult for predators to detect; still, many species have one of several secondary lines of defense in the form of startle displays, spines or toxic secretions." Steer clear of the two-striped walking stick in the southeastern U.S.! They can spray a foul-smelling, milky fluid from their thorax that can cause temporary blindness if it gets in the eyes.



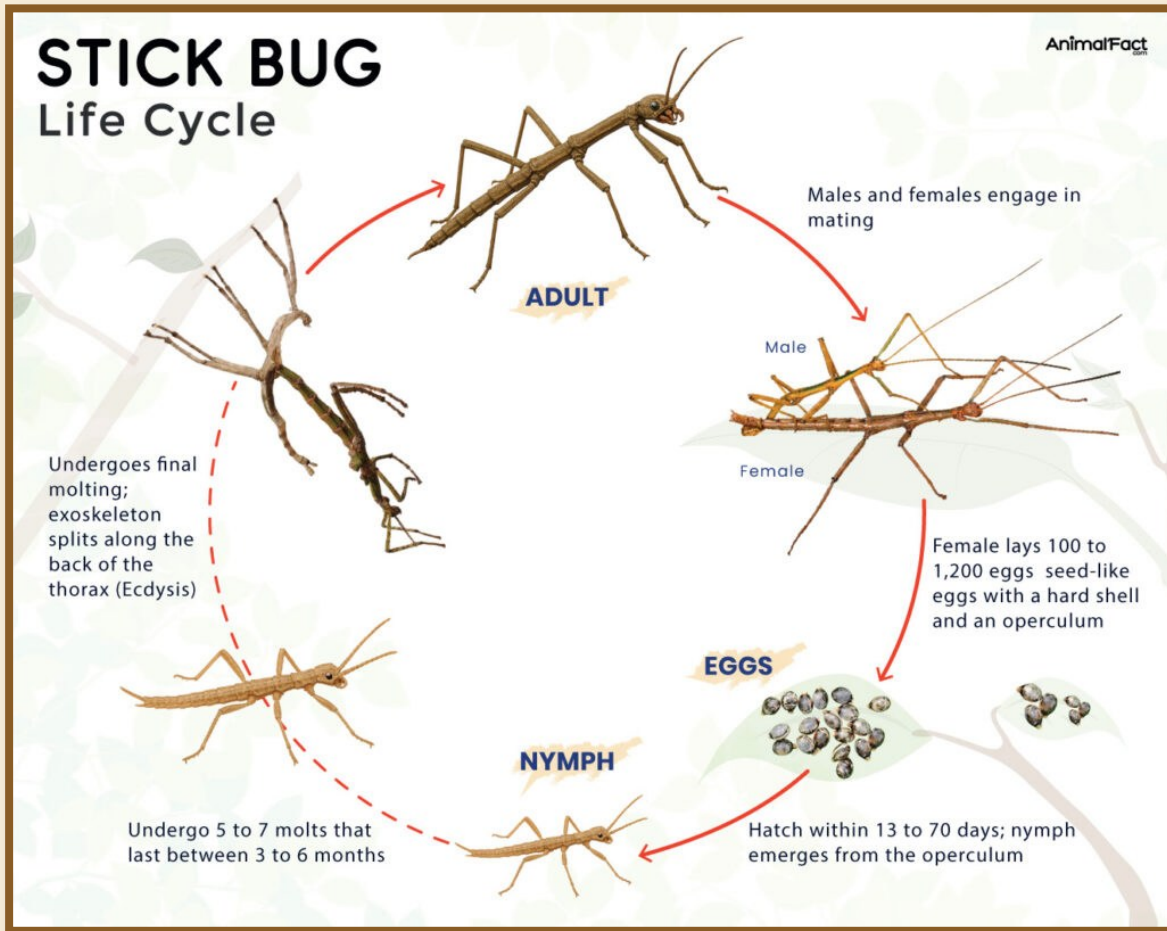
One member of the order is the longest insect in the world. There are over 3,000 species of stick bugs worldwide with most found in the tropics. Forty-four species are found in the U.S. and Canada.

They are slow-moving herbivores. That must be why so many of the kids at LLELA find them! They eat the edges of plant leaves. They are more active at night. Many will feign death when disturbed, sometimes falling to the ground in the weeds and remaining motionless.



Wild About LLELA

Sue Yost, class of 2017



Females can lay thousands of eggs, which they glue to vegetation singly or in batches, or let drop to the ground. Stick insects develop by metamorphosis and usually molt six to seven times before reaching maturity. Adults only live several weeks to a few months.

If you want to "stick it" and hunt for these really cool insects at LLELA, early spring into summer in the fields behind the log cabin and the fields near the pavilion are the perfect areas to look for them. Bring a kid with you....they always spot them first!!

Credits: NWF Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North America, Wikipedia

Photos: Sue Yost, sciencing.com, animalfact.com, iStock-Credit: KarSol

Features

National Trails, Rights of Way, and Open Access Land— Hiking the English Cotswolds

By Jerry Hamby

The Cotswolds conjure up images of limestone cottages, colorful gardens, and gothic churches. Picturesque villages dot the countryside of rolling hills, or “wolds,” and checkerboard farms and pastures. Most visitors cross this landscape by train or car, but my wife Susan and I recently explored the Cotswolds on foot. Joining us on this adventure were our friends and fellow Texas Master Naturalists Rick and Lisa Travis, along with twelve other travelers, on a two-week excursion organized by Road Scholar, a not-for-profit organization that provides “learning adventures” for adults aged fifty and older.

Our home base for the first week was the village of Mickleton. Before meeting up with our group, Susan and I took a leisurely walk to Hidcote Manor Garden, an influential Arts and Crafts garden built in the early twentieth century by Lawrence Johnston (after his mother bought the 300-acre estate for him). The site is now owned and maintained by the National Trust, which oversees more than 500 historic sites and 200,000 acres of land across the United Kingdom. After walking through the garden “rooms” near the house, Susan and I took refuge in the gift shop to wait out a rainstorm. It was the only time inclement weather interfered with our outdoor activities.

Like most days, our first group outing provided a mix of cultural and historical experiences with a vigorous hike, led by our leaders Ian and Simon. We began the morning with a walking tour of Chipping Campden, a market town dating from the fourteenth century. It was outside a block of historic almshouses that I first spotted a red valerian (*Valeriana rubra*), a popular garden plant with large pink flowers at the tips of the branches. Above the garden bed, wall bellflowers (*Campanula portenschlagiana*) bloomed in the mortar joints of the limestone wall. Both plants are native to the European continent and have naturalized in England.

Chipping Campden is the starting point for the Cotswold Way, a 102-mile National Trail that ends in Bath. A stone marker



Hidcote Manor Garden



Red valerian



Wall bellflowers



*National Trails, Rights of Way, and Open Access Land—
Hiking the English Cotswolds (cont.)*



Triangulation Station,
Dover's Hill

outside the historic Market Hall lists key towns on the route and includes the following passage by the poet T.S. Eliot: “Now the light falls across the open fields leaving the deep lane shuttered with branches dark in the afternoon.” An acorn in the center of the marker symbolizes the National Trail system. This icon appeared on signposts on every trail we hiked.

Our six-mile hike to Broadway Village included two dramatic stops, the first of which was Dover’s Hill, a National Trust site. In addition to overlooking a natural amphitheater, the hill shows traces of the “ridge and furrow” ploughing system that was used in open-field farming from the post-Roman period (AD 400) to the seventeenth century. The surviving ridges, spaced several yards apart, create subtle waves across the flat hilltop that could easily be overlooked. One key advantage of traveling with experienced leaders like Ian and Simon is learning about such details.



Public footpath crossing a rapeseed field



Broadway Tower

The highlight of the hike was a stop at Broadway Tower, an eighteenth-century “folly,” a whimsical building constructed for decoration rather than



Ian standing behind a dry stone wall

practical use. It later became a retreat for William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Our hike ended with a gentle descent through sheep pastures to the village of Broadway. On all our hikes, we passed through dozens of gates and stiles, each varying in style and structure, that allowed us to cross from one owner’s land to another’s.

The National Trail System consists of Public Rights of Way, legally protected centuries-old footpaths, many of which cut across farmland. Some areas, such as Dover’s Hill and Broadway Hill, are designated “open access land,” allowing visitors the right to roam away from the path. Our first hike also introduced us to Cotswold stone fences, mortarless dry stone walls that have intersected the English landscape for thousands



Stone wall and signpost near Broadway Hill



National Trails, Rights of Way, and Open Access Land— Hiking the English Cotswolds (cont.)

of years. The construction—uniform in the width and taper of the wall and placement of stones—is iconic, down to the “cock and hen” capping stones that keep the lower layers in place and shed rainwater.



Medieval city wall, New College, Oxford

We took a break from hiking on the second day by completing a five-mile walking tour of Oxford, the “City of Dreaming Spires,” as described by the Victorian poet Matthew Arnold. During a visit to New College, we walked inside the thirteenth-century medieval city wall, which the college is legally obligated to maintain. (Since 1379, the Lord Mayor of Oxford has participated in a ceremonial inspection of the City Walls every three years.) Today the walls enclose manicured grounds and formal gardens.

Like many of the plant species I documented in cities, towns, and villages, my iNaturalist

observations at New College were casual grade (since the plants were placed there and do not grow wild.) One tree of note was a kobus magnolia (*Magnolia kobus*), a Japanese native with a wide-spreading canopy. The tree had already bloomed but was filled with ripening seed pods.

On our third day, which ended with a five-mile hike through Duntisbourne Valley, I encountered more native species, including woodland forget-me-nots (*Myosotis sylvatica*). Seeing these iconic bright blue flowers on the woodland edges, I understood why they are popular garden flowers. In the tiny village of Duntisbourne Abbots (population 225), we passed St. Peter’s Church. Inside the churchyard, buttercups (genus *Ranunculus*) dotted the gravesites, and oxeye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) lined the churchyard wall.

During my two-week visit, I observed eight species in the poppy family (Papaveraceae), from the bright orange atlas poppy (*Papaver atlanticum*) to the large Oriental poppy (*P. orientale*), both of which appeared in garden settings, but the species I encountered most often was the more compact (but equally vivid) common poppy (*P. rhoeas*). The scarlet flower with a black center, also known as a Flanders poppy, is associated with remembrance of the fallen soldiers of World War I.

One of the highlights of my time in the Cotswolds was a visit to Kelmscott Manor, home to William Morris, whom I mentioned earlier. While our time there provided a break from the outdoors, the tour of the house reinforced the connection between the Arts and Crafts movement and nature. Botanical studies and the environment provided inspiration for many of Morris’s designs, which were evident in every room of the manor. The wallpapers,



Oxeye daisies



Common poppies



Kelmscott Manor



*National Trails, Rights of Way, and Open Access Land—
Hiking the English Cotswolds (cont.)*

curtains, embroideries, and decorative tiles featured motifs of birds, flowers, fruits, and vines, and many of those designs mirrored the manor's gardens. For example, "Strawberry Thief," one of Morris's iconic designs, was inspired by the thrushes that plundered his kitchen garden.



Village of Bibury

Before embarking on an afternoon hike, we enjoyed a picnic lunch on the grass between the River Thames and the fruit orchard that Morris maintained in the late 1800s. On our hike, we passed through Bibury, which Morris described as "the most beautiful village in England," and walked along the River Coln. We also encountered an unexpected tree species, a giant sequoia



Giant sequoia

(*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). This massive conifer, which is native to the western slopes of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range, is considered the largest tree on earth. William Lobb, a British plant collector, discovered the giant sequoia on an 1852 trip to California and brought seeds and seedlings back to England. Today there are more than half a million redwoods growing in the UK.

Our final hike in the Cotswolds followed a section of the Wardens' Way, starting near Naunton and ending at Bourton-on-the-Water. Along the way we passed through the Upper and Lower Slaughter, unspoiled villages whose macabre name derives from an Old English word meaning "muddy place." Stretches of our hike followed the Rivers Eye and Windrush, allowing us to experience even greater variety in the landscape.

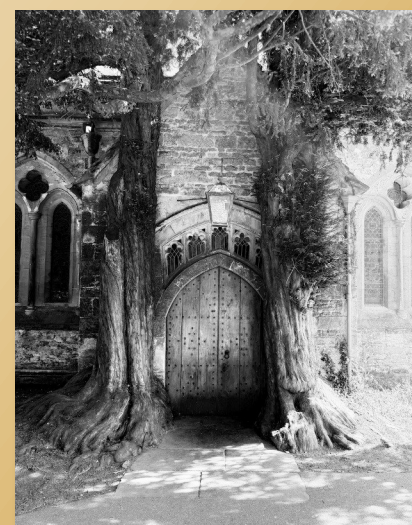


Cotswold Lion

We ended the day with a low-key exploration of Stow-on-the-Wold, and because our visit coincided with a community medieval fair, we witnessed some local color—Morris dancers, musicians, and, most significantly, three Cotswold Lions that a breeder had brought to the Market Square. These historic domestic sheep (*Ovis aries*) are named for their large size and long, curly fleece. At their height in Medieval England, there were half a million of these sheep, but according to the Cotswold Sheep Society, there are now only 1,350 breeding ewes, which puts the breed at high risk of extinction.

Before taking our coach back to Mickleton, we stopped at St. Edward's Church to see the "Tolkien Door," the thirteenth-century entryway that is believed to be the inspiration for the "Doors of Durin," the west gate of Moria in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Whether the story is true or not, the seven-hundred-year-old common yew trees (*Taxus baccata*) that frame the doorway enhance the drama of the setting.

As our first week in England came to an end, our group anticipated the next leg of the adventure, a 200-mile drive to Cornwall (with a stop in the City of Wells). From our second home base of Camelford, we would encounter a more rugged landscape while hiking three sections of the South West Coast Path, and we would discover why this is one of the most scenic walking routes in England.



North door of St. Edward's Church, Stow-on-the-Wold

Tweet of the Month

From Sue Yost, class of 2017

The White-eyed Vireo

The White-eyed Vireo, according to Sam Crowe on Birdzilla.com, “is a small songbird species with a distinctive olive-green plumage, a white iris, and a conspicuous white eye-ring. It is found in shrubby habitats in the southeastern United States, Mexico and parts of Central America, and is known for its lively, rhythmic songs, which it delivers from concealed perches deep within the vegetation.”

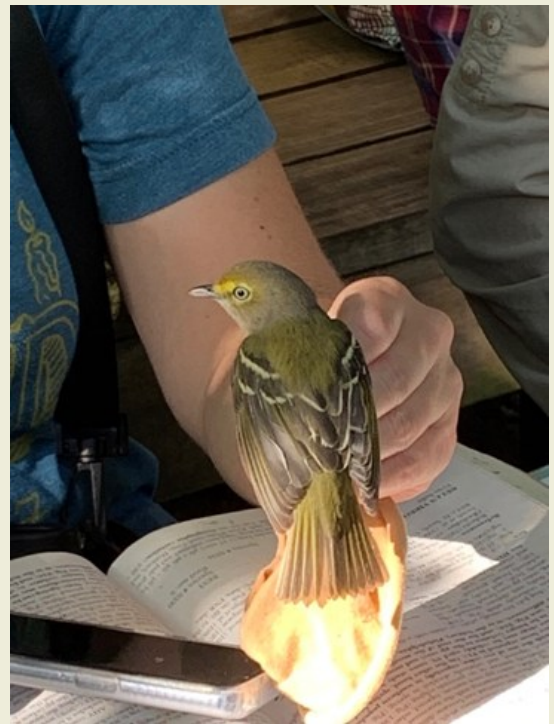
Crowe continues, “They can be found in brush, wood edges and undergrowth. They breed in different kinds of dense low growth, including shrubby thickets of maple, briar tangles on low swampy ground, saplings in overgrown pastures, and scrub near forest edges or in open woods.” They are breeders at LLELA.

“A White-eyed Vireo’s diet is primarily made up of insects and berries. During breeding season, they almost only eat insects. Some of the insects they eat are flies, caterpillars, beetles, butterflies, moths, leafhoppers, spiders, and lacewings,” which they collect from shrubs and trees. “They’ll sometimes eat snails and small lizards as well. During migration and in the winter, they eat berries and other small fruits.”

“White-eyed Vireos make short flights between shrubs and hop along branches; this keeps them well hidden. Males will sing from the edges of the underbrush all day long, even during the hottest part of the day.”

At LLELA it is a bird that haunts you on the trails. Sounding like it is right in front of you but never can be found. Following you along the trail...taunting you with its call. These Vireos sing at all times of the day, but you’ll hear more frequent vocalizations at dusk and dawn. Their calls include a harsh, nasal mew and a short zip that somewhat sounds like a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Some claim that they sing “*Spit. And see if I care. Spit.*” while others say they sing, “*Pik-chicka-weew.*” Over and over and over.

“White-eyed Vireos breed throughout the eastern United States. Breeding extends all the way north to Massachusetts.” They are regularly heard and sometimes



The White-eyed Vireo (cont.)



even seen at LLELA during the spring and summer. “They are commonly seen along the Gulf Coast and into Florida in winter.” “During the non-breeding season, White-eye Vireos can be seen in the Belize Honduras, Yucatan Peninsula, parts of the Caribbean, and parts of the Bahamas.”

Wikipedia also has an interesting article on this bird. According to the article, they “nest at eye level or near the ground in tangled thickets. Nests are made of weeds, leaves, grass, bark or bits of trash. The grass-lined nest is a neat cup shape, attached to a fork in a tree branch by spider webs. They lay three to five dark-spotted white eggs. Both the male and female incubate the eggs for 12–16 days. The young leave the nest 9–11 days after hatching.”

Field marks are distinctive. The white iris — visible even at moderate distances — is the defining feature that gives this bird its name. Adults display two bold white wing bars, yellow-green flanks, and a yellow spectacle pattern around the eye that frames the face neatly. The upperparts are olive-green, and the bill is slightly hooked at the tip, as is typical across the Vireo family.

There are 13 species of vireos found in Texas. Bell's, Black-capped (endangered), Red-eyed, Cassin's, Yellow-throated, Blue headed, Plumbeous, Warbling, Philadelphia, Yellow-green, Gray, Hutton's, and of course the White-eyed Vireo. My life list is missing the Gray, Yellow-green, and Cassin's. Someday I will see them, but for now I will continue trying to get my bins on the elusive trickster, the White-eyed Vireo.



Credits: Birdzilla.com, Animalsoftthings.com, Wikipedia

Photos: Sue Yost, Flickr

This Month's Contributors



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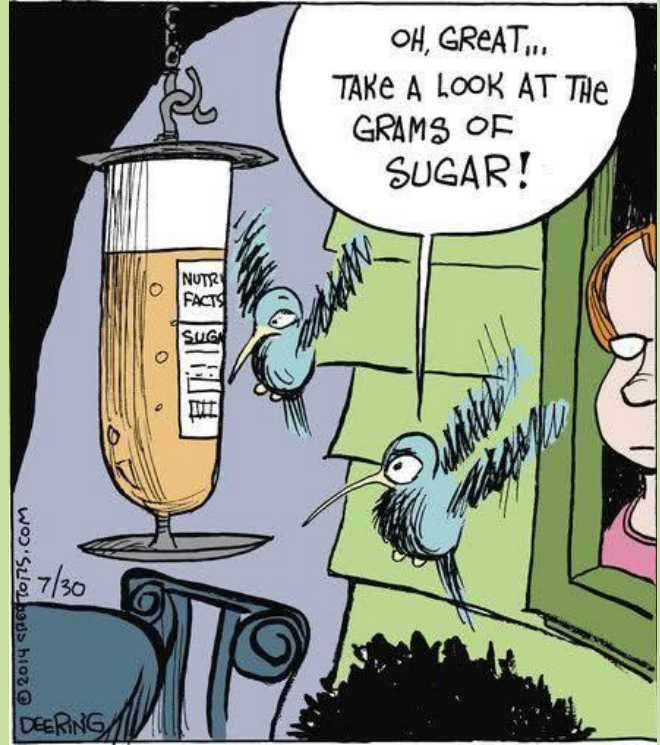


Mary Morrow

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

Almost the Last Word

Funny Finds From Sue Yost!

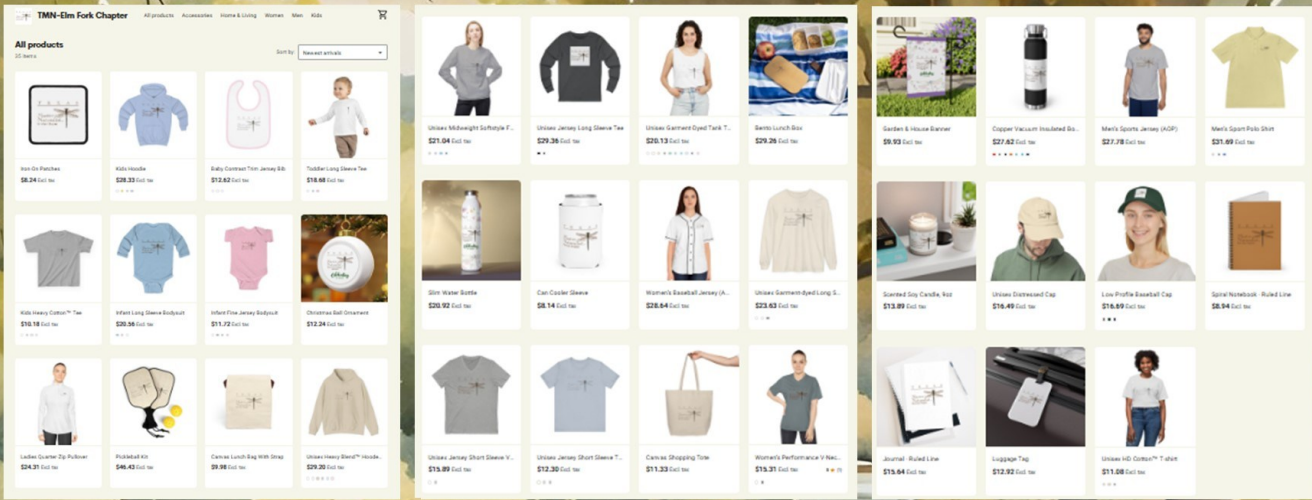


The 2026 Training Committee is asking for your help by actively seeking your gently used TMN Textbooks. We request any TMN-EFC Member that is not using their TMN Textbook to help us reduce, reuse and recycle your textbooks by donating it back to our Chapter. It is easy! Just bring your textbooks to the next few Monthly Chapter Meetings.

Contact Marissa Shaw or any member of the 2026 Training Committee to coordinate.

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 *elmforkchaptertmn* 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



Tammie Walters, Editor

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

July 2026 submissions are due by:

Monday, July 6th



Who We Are



Texas Master Naturalist–Elm Fork Chapter

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

OFFICERS

President - Brenda Martin

Vice President - Sharon Betty

Treasurer - Ginny Richards

Secretary - Debbie Nobles

BOARD POSITIONS

Immediate Past President – Bryan Lewis

Member-at-Large – Open

BOARD DIRECTORS

Membership - Sharon Betty

VMS - Jim Gerber

Initial Training - Marissa Shaw

Communications - Susan Richmond

Volunteer Service Projects - Rob Blake

Advanced Training Programs - Delia Croessmann

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.

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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.

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