

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter



Naturalist News

July 2026 Volume 26, Issue 7



John Thomlinson

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

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/



Naturalist News

Inside This Issue:

Announcements.....	3
Upcoming Chapter Meetings.....	4
Awards and Recognition.....	6
Field Notes in Focus.....	8
Inside Outside News.....	9
Projects in the Community.....	14
Wild About LLELA.....	21
Features.....	23
Tweet of the Month.....	28
This Month's Contributors.....	30
Almost the Last Word.....	31
Who We Are.....	33

Editors:

Tammie Walters-Design
Karen DeVinney
Mary Morrow
Brynne Bryan

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



On the Cover:

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)
by John Thomlinson

Read the article "Green Herons at Green Acres" on page 14.



Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*)
by Jonathan Reynolds

Announcements

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.



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

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

This Month'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.



Upcoming Chapter Meetings

August Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, August 20th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

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

August's Presentation:

Green Stormwater Infrastructure: Design, Performance and Maintenance

By: Dr. Fouad Jaber
Professor and Water Resources Extension Specialist
Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center
at Dallas

Urbanization is reshaping the health of rivers, streams and lakes in every community. Join Dr. Fouad Jaber, an expert in hydrology management, as he shares nature-based strategies for reducing these impacts at residential and larger scales. He will also present findings from a green stormwater infrastructure study done at the Dallas center and discuss maintenance considerations.



Photo by Dr. Fouad Jaber



Dr. Jaber is a professor and extension specialist in integrated water resources management at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Dallas. A professional engineer in Texas, his research and programs in green stormwater infrastructure, nature-based systems, stream restoration and climate change resiliency have received over \$3 million in funding. His work is published in scientific journals, conference papers, extension publications and government reports.

Dr. Jaber's contributions have been honored with awards from the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineering and the American Society for Horticultural Sciences. He earned a Ph.D. in agricultural and biological engineering from Purdue University and a master's degree in irrigation and bachelor's degree in agricultural and biological engineering from the American University of Beirut.



Awards and Recognition

June 2026

Initial Certifications

Jennifer Lane

Class of 2025



2026 Recertifications

Robert Blake

Class of 2024

Sherry Brott

Class of 2025

Bill Coleman

Class of 2013

Sarah DeLeon

Class of 2025

Michael Hatch

Class of 2014

Rob Hull

Class of 2025

Cindy Jones

Class of 2024

Tom Kirwan

Class of 2024

Angie Lindsey

Class of 2018

Amy Montgomery

Class of 2023

Cynthia Pierce

Class of 2024

Jamie Reneau

Class of 2022

Sue Ridnour

Class of 2024

Roxann Strout

Class of 2025



Awards and Recognition

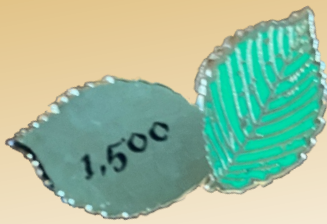
June 2026



1000 Hour Milestone

Marty Newman

Class of 2020



1500 Hour Milestone

Kesa Clingman
Amy Crook

Class of 2017
Class of 2020

Congratulations everyone!



Field Notes in Focus



Swallowtail caterpillars by Tammie Walters

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training

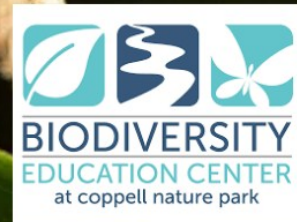
Admiring Moths Talk

**10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.,
Saturday, July 18**

**Biodiversity Education Center at
Coppell Nature Park
367 Freeport Parkway, Coppell**

Public welcome

[https://www.coppelltx.gov/401/
Biodiversity-Education-Center](https://www.coppelltx.gov/401/Biodiversity-Education-Center)



Celebrate the beginning of National Moth Week (July 18-26) at the Biodiversity Education Center at Coppell Nature Park. Joshua Ebright with the North Texas Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist will lead us for a lively conversation about these fascinating creatures and discover how we can help moths thrive in Texas for years to come.

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

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.

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



Inside Outside News

Advanced Training



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

- **Wednesday, July 15th, 6:30-7:30 p.m.**
 - * *Conservation Opportunity Areas in Texas*
 - * Jennifer Marrugo, Ecologist at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - Wildlife Division
 - * [Register](#)
- **Wednesday, August 12th, 6:30-7:30 p.m.**
 - * *Investing in Texas' Water Future*
 - * Jeremy Mazur, Director of Infrastructure and Natural Resources Policy at Texas 2036
 - * [Register](#)

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

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

Volunteer Opportunities

DFW Wildlife Coalition

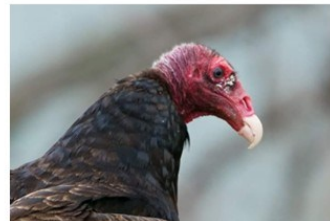
Looking for Volunteers

Volunteer for a 2 or 3 hour shift

Once a week from your home

6 hours of Online Training

If interested or for more information,
contact Beth Bargar or Andrea Dixon
through the Membership Directory.



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

Ray Roberts Lake State Park, Johnson Branch Nature Center



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!*

Elm Fork Chapter

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[Newsletters](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Members Area](#)
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Today < > July 2026

SUN 28	MON 29	TUE 30	WED Jul 1	THU 2	FRI 3	SAT 4
10am Ray Roberts L 10am AT - Texas Me	9am LLELA Monday 9am Clear Creek Wc 10am Ray Roberts L 2pm AT - Webinar: F	9am Beulah Acres A 9am Green Acres Wc 9am LLELA Trailhea 10am Ray Roberts L	9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Wednes 10am Ray Roberts L	10am Ray Roberts L	- Independence Day (subs) 10am Ray Roberts L	- Independence Day 9am AT - Early Bird 10am Ray Roberts L 10am LLELA - Guidi
10am Ray Roberts L	9am LLELA Monday 9am Clear Creek Wc 10am Ray Roberts L 1pm Roots for Wi	9am Beulah Acres A 9am Green Acres Wc 9am LLELA Trailhea 10am Ray Roberts L 6:30pm AT - *Resch	9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Wednes 10am Ray Roberts L	9:30am Board Meeti 10am Ray Roberts L	10am Ray Roberts L	9am McCord Park W 9am AT - Furneaux 10am Ray Roberts L 8pm AT - Blacklight
10am Ray Roberts L 1pm AT - Texas Met	9am LLELA Monday 9am Clear Creek Wc 10am Ray Roberts L	9am Beulah Acres A 9am Green Acres Wc 9am LLELA Trailhea 10am Ray Roberts L 10am Ray Roberts L 2:30pm AT - Nature 11:45am AT - Watch	9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Wednes 10am Ray Roberts L 2:30pm AT - Nature 4:30pm AT - Texas	9am Chapter Meeti 10am Ray Roberts L	10am Ray Roberts L	10am Ray Roberts L 10am AT - Drawing I 10am AT - Admiring

calendar@efctmn.org
Events shown in time zone: (GMT-05:00) Central Time - Chicago

Google Calendar

Projects in the Community

Green Herons at Green Acres

By Becky Bertoni

On Tuesday, June 2, during our volunteer time at the Green Acres Farm Memorial Park, Andrew and Emily, both class of 2026 trainees who are currently volunteering with the Green Acres project, heard a different bird call. Emily spotted a heron nest just on the other side of the east fence, in a tree between the fence and the pond. She took photos and they told us about it.

I didn't remember seeing any herons there before, so it was exciting to learn. The herons were identified on iNaturalist as Green Herons. I think their presence by this pond may be because of the additional land we added this year. There is a wet section that is filled with grassleaf rushes (*Juncus marginatus*) that may have made the site look welcoming to them.

Then on June 9, the next volunteer Tuesday, Emily saw that there were two families, each with two parents and three babies. Family 1 was in a tree with green leaves, and Family 2 was in a tree on dead branches--not good for camouflage! Note how Emily marked on the photo below to show the babies and parent. You can tell by the photos that the Family 1 baby is older, with feathers, compared to the fuzzy Family 2 baby.



Family 1 baby well hidden in the leaves of a tree
Photo by Emily Markel



Family 2 three babies with 1 parent
Photo by Emily Markel

We watched these two families and on June 12, during the blacklighting evening at Green Acres, participants for the blacklighting event walked over to see a family group of a parent and three young ones in a different tree with dead branches.



Family 2 baby on a dead branch
Photo by Emily Markel



Green Herons at Green Acres (cont.)



Close up of Family 2 parent
Photo by Emily Markel

Through time we noted some behaviors. I saw parents “standing guard” from higher branches to watch over the young birds. Jenna saw Green Herons coming from over the west fence and landing in our riparian area.

On Tuesday, June 23, there was one parent bird on the nest with bluish eggs, and all of the others apparently have relocated. We will keep watching!

On June 29, Brynne saw the parent Green Heron on the nest, along with some juvenile Green Herons. She also spotted a juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron.

I looked up Green Herons and found that they are here only during the warmer weather, migrating south for the winter. They nest near water usually, and don’t normally nest in large clusters. Eggs take about 20 days to hatch. We should see more babies between July 14-21.

To hear Green Heron calls and read more look here:

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/green-heron>

You are welcome to come and visit and follow the Green Herons.



Bluish eggs in the twig nest
Photo by Becky Bertoni



Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron
Photo by John Thomlinson

Projects in the Community

Blacklight Nights

By Brynne Bryan

The 4th blacklight night at Green Acres with Sam Kieschnick was just last month, on June 12th. It was a hoot, as usual with anything that Sam orchestrates. There were 1020 observations of the nighttime creatures visiting the backlit bedsheets that night, made by 16 current and nascent Elm Fork Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and other enthusiasts. If you think there are a lot of species of birds and butterflies in North Texas, you should consider the moths, beetles and other bugs! There were other things seen in the fading light, but though I love birds, reptiles, and plants, I am going to ignore them in this story.

Insects are drawn to any light source at night, as you may have noticed on your porch at night IF you still leave your light on. This behavior can disrupt their natural navigation and interactions. They are even more attracted to ultraviolet (UV) light such as reflected off the moon or emitted by blacklights. UV light is mostly invisible to us, except for the longer bluish or purplish wavelengths. Insects may use UV light for finding and recognizing resources. Because of this strong attraction to UV light, blacklights are particularly useful tools for entomologists studying insect populations. The insects quickly regain their composure once the lights are turned off.

Even though there were over 1000 observations submitted to i-Naturalist (henceforth i-Nat) that night, that doesn't mean there were over 1000 species. What happens during an event like this is that Sam or someone else shouts out "Hey! Look at this incredible thing!" and everyone (including myself) rushes over to get a photo of it. One individual bug might have 15 observations. That's cool. The beauty of i-Nat is that it can sift through observations and tell you how many actual species were seen. When an organism has been verified by at least one other person to the species level (if such an identification is possible without peering at the organism's underparts), it



Sam Kieschnick explaining how blacklighting for bugs will work, and how amazed we will be. Photo by Marilyn Blanton



Becky Bertoni and the crowd examining the first bugs. Photo by Marilyn Blanton



Sam sharing a cool find. Photo by Becky Bertoni



Blacklight Nights (cont.)

becomes research-grade. This year, over half of the observations were verified as research-grade, and this number is slowly increasing as the identifiers go back over the submissions.

Before I continue, I want to give a disclaimer. Some people (myself included) refer to any small thing that creeps, crawls, or flits around as a bug. They might consider things like spiders, ticks, and millipedes to be bugs, and that's fine. They are all arthropods - things with jointed legs and exoskeletons. Calling them "bugs" is just a colloquial way of referring to them. However, a true entomologist will tell you that only insects in the Order Hemiptera are True Bugs, and none of the others - not beetles, moths, spiders, millipedes, or anything else. Hemipterans are in a group of insects that hold their wings over their backs like a roof (think cicadas) or have wings that are at least semitransparent on the back end (think stinkbugs). Leafhoppers are Hemipterans, too. They are small, but because of their sheer numbers they can make up most of the biomass of things coming to the blacklights.



© Brent Franklin

Little Mesquite Cicada
Pacarina puella



© Sam Kieschnick

Rice Stink Bug
Oebalus pugnax

Leafhoppers

© Brynne Bryan



Complex
Ponana citrina



Complex
Paraphlepsius continuus



Dikrella maculata

Because I'm a nerd and I love spreadsheets, I wanted to see how many species of bugs were documented over the past four years. I downloaded the data from each year and put them side by side. I organized the species taxonomically, with a focus on how many species were in each Order.

For those of you who are a little rusty on your taxonomic classification, here is a little refresher. There are ruder mnemonics, but I will leave that up to your imagination. All levels are always capitalized except species, and Genus and species are always set apart by underlining or italicizing. If you see them written otherwise, you can shake your head and go "Tsk tsk!"



Kingdom	Kindly
Phylum	Pay
Class	Cash
Order	Or
Family	Forget
Genus	Getting
Species	served

Blacklight Nights (cont.)

		Orders
Arachnids	Spiders	Araneae
	Harvestmen	Opiliones
	Mites	Sarcoptiforme
Insects	Roaches	Blattodea
	Beetles	Coleoptera
	Earwigs	Dermaptera
	Flies and allies	Diptera
	Web-spinning insect	Embioptera
	Mayflies	Ephemeroptera
	True bugs	Hemiptera
	Wasps and Ants	Hymenoptera
	Moths and Butterflies	Lepidoptera
	Mantises	Mantodea
	Owlfly, Lacewings, etc.	Neuroptera
	Dragonflies and Damselflies	Odonata
	Grasshoppers, Crickets	Orthoptera
	Bark lice, book lice, etc	Psocodea
	Caddisflies	Trichoptera

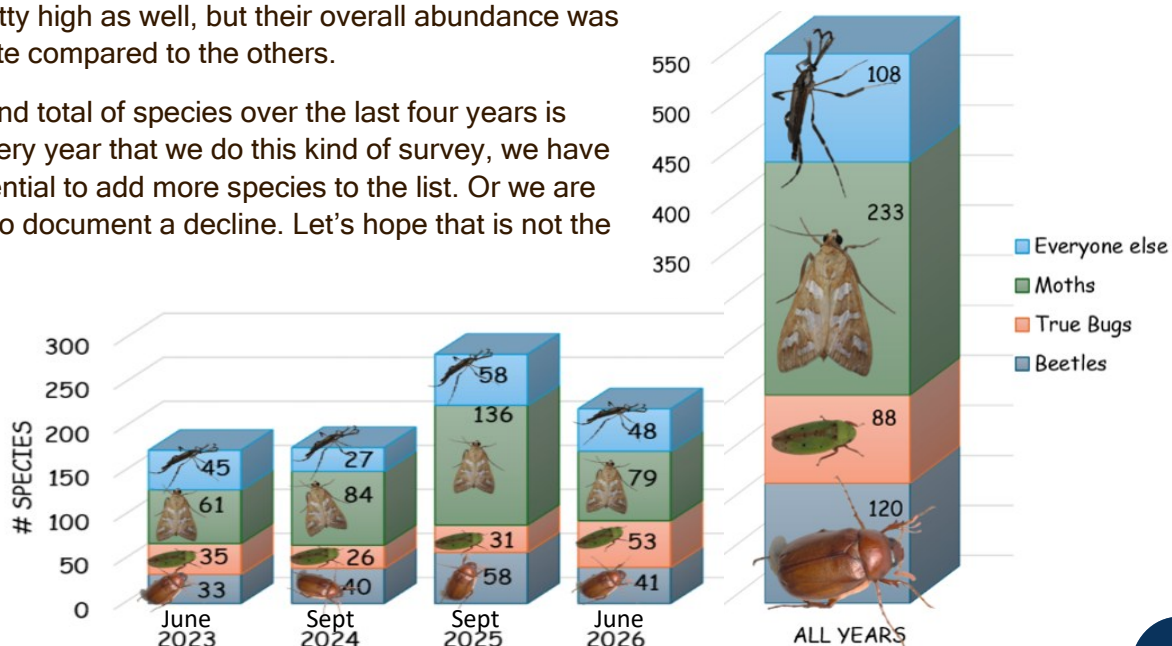
There are 18 Orders in the Phylum Arthropoda represented at Green Acres at night. I wanted to try to simplify this story by focusing on the Orders with the most species and the greatest abundance: the Beetles, the True Bugs, and the Moths (forget about the Butterflies - they don't typically fly at night). This year, after all the redundant observations were accounted for, there were over 200 species that came to the lights.

How does that compare to previous years? The number of observers has been fairly consistent over the last four years, and the number of arthropod species hasn't changed that much from year to year, considering that the number of photos taken has nearly doubled. As a matter of interest, only 25 species have returned each year. It is a shifting dynamic of bugs that show themselves yearly.

	2023	2024	2025	2026
# Observations	608	621	1179	1004
# Observers	13	12	14	16
# Arthropod Species	176	175	280	225
% Research-grade	83%	74%	75%	77%

It should come as no surprise that there were more moth species than anything else. Their numbers weren't nearly as high as the True Bugs or the Dipterans (the midges and their relatives). This is not based on counting them of course, but on trying to keep them out of my eyes and mouth. The diversity of beetles was pretty high as well, but their overall abundance was moderate compared to the others.

The grand total of species over the last four years is 549. Every year that we do this kind of survey, we have the potential to add more species to the list. Or we are poised to document a decline. Let's hope that is not the case.



Blacklight Nights (cont.)

Becky Bertoni has done such a marvelous job of leading volunteers in restoring habitat for native plants and their pollinators. She will tell you that the volunteers deserve the credit, but the volunteers are inspired by Becky's energy. The HEB Pollinators of Texas grant she received last year is a testament to her efforts. There was a team of people in addition to herself who were instrumental in obtaining this grant. Tom Kirwan had the idea of applying for it and the experience with what goes into a grant proposal. Livy (Olivia) Reese kept the numbers straight with her spreadsheet skills. Aly Foreman was most helpful in editing the language of the grant. Once all of that was done and the grant received, the team of volunteers worked hard to get the plants (and seeds) in the ground.

Daytime pollinators are constantly being documented by naturalists, but not very much is known about who is creeping and flying around the gardens at night. Some of these nocturnal inhabitants will pollinate the flowers directly by targeting nectar, and some of them do it inadvertently just by clambering all over them. Regardless, documenting biodiversity, both diurnal and nocturnal, shows the importance of fostering and maintaining diverse habitats. The plants obtained with the grant have played a huge role in enhancing this diversity. There would not be nearly as many species of bugs, or birds and other wildlife that depend on them if all we had was just one big Bermudagrass lawn.

There are other opportunities to document nocturnal bugs in the region. Sam Kieschnick is hosting a slew of blacklight events this month. Follow this link to keep updated:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/journal/sambiology/124190-gatherings-and-bioblitzes-in-and-around-dfw-in-2026>

Here are some of my favorite photos of the bugs and the people they visited on June 12th.

Moths - Lepidoptera

			
©Brynne Bryan	©Brent Franklin	©Brynne Bryan	©Andrew Reyes
Pink-shaded Fern Moth <i>Callopietria mollissima</i>	Moonseed Moth <i>Plusiodonta compressipalpis</i>	Fractured Western Snout <i>Diastictis fracturalis</i>	Emily's moth Crambid Snout Moths Possible Garden Webworm Moth - <i>Achyra rantalis</i>



Blacklight Nights (cont.)

Beetles - Coleoptera

			
©John Thomlinson	©Carl Parsons	©Roxann Strout	©Sam Kieschnick
Grapevine Beetle <i>Pelidnota punctata</i>	Flat-faced Longhorn Beetle group <i>Lepturges angulatus</i>	Ashy Gray Lady Beetle <i>Olla v-nigrum</i>	Gazelle Scarab (a dung beetle) <i>Digitonthophagus gazella</i>

True Bugs - Hemiptera

			
©John Thomlinson	©Brynne Bryan	©Karen Burkwall Johnson	©Sam Kieschnick
Hieroglyphic Cicada <i>Neocicada hieroglyphica</i>	Microleafhopper <i>Eratoneura lunata</i>	Lateral-lined Sharpshooter <i>Cuerna costalis</i>	Green Stilt Bug <i>Metacanthus multispinus</i>

Other

Order Diptera	Order Hymenoptera	Order Neuroptera	Order Neuroptera
			
©Brynne Bryan	©Brent Franklin	©Brynne Bryan	©Brent Franklin
Gallinipper - a species of mosquito. A male, with bushy antennae. <i>Psorophora ciliata</i>	A winged Velvet ant <i>Timulla navasota</i>	Say's Mantidfly <i>Dicromantispa sayi</i>	Macleay's Owlfly <i>Ululodes macleayanus</i>

Wild About LLELA

Sue Yost, class of 2017

Ebony Jewelwing

Crown jewels are meant for royalty. The crown jewels at LLELA belong to the **ebony jewelwing**, which arrives in late spring. The ebony jewelwing is a magnificent damselfly.

It is of average size for a damselfly, 1.5-2.2 inches long (between 39-57 mm). The male is flashier than the female, with a metallic blue-green body and black wings, while the female is duller brown with smoke-colored wings. Her wings have white spots near the tips. In the sun, the male's body is iridescent, with the wings creating a striking contrast. It's electrifying!



Photo by Alan Gann

According to dragonflyguid.com, "These damselflies prefer clean, slow-moving water surrounded by trees or shrubs. Wooded streams provide ideal conditions because they offer perching spots, shelter from strong winds, and aquatic vegetation for egg-laying."

The Blackjack Trail is the only place at LLELA to find them. Usually, the first few creek crossings is where they like to hang out, flitting and fluttering, much like a butterfly, amongst the greenery. You must be quick to snap a photo of this jewel!

dragonflyguid.com continues: "Water quality is extremely important for this species. Because their larvae develop underwater, they thrive in areas with low pollution and healthy aquatic ecosystems. As a result, their presence often indicates good environmental conditions."

Ebony jewelwings mate in the summer. As dragonflyguid.com describes it, "The life cycle begins when the female lays her eggs in aquatic plants. Using her ovipositor, she inserts eggs into submerged stems or leaves just below the water's surface. In some cases, the female may partially submerge herself while laying eggs, remaining underwater for short periods. The eggs remain hidden within plant tissue, where they are protected from many predators."

After hatching, the young damselflies enter the nymph stage, which is entirely aquatic. This phase can last several months to more than a year, depending on environmental conditions. While nymphs, ebony jewelwings are active predators. They use their extendable mouthparts to capture prey including aquatic invertebrates like insect larvae and tiny crustaceans. The nymphs molt many times, each time shedding their exoskeletons and growing larger, until they are ready to climb out of the water and move onto their next phase. At this point, the outer skin splits open, and the adult damselfly emerges. Initially the wings are soft and crumpled, but they soon expand and harden as fluids are pumped through them. Once its wings are fully formed and dry, the ebony jewelwing takes its first flight, beginning the final stage of its life above water.



Wild About LLELA

Sue Yost, class of 2017



Wikipedia lists the prey of this species as mosquitos, water fleas, green darners, giant willow aphid, fungus gnats, crane flies, large diving beetles, eastern dobsonfly, caddisflies, rotifers, amphipods, dogwood borer and six spotted tiger beetle (of LLELA fame). And the predators of the ebony jewelwing include birds such as the Great Crested Flycatcher, American Robin, Mallard, Red-winged Blackbird and Blue Jay, reptiles and amphibians such as the eastern painted turtle, common snapping turtle, and southern leopard frog, fish such as the bluegill, largemouth bass, creek chub, channel catfish, common carp, and northern hogsucker, mammals such as the big brown bat, and insects such as the green darner, large diving beetles, eastern dobsonfly, and common water strider, all of which are found at LLELA.

The LLELA Blackjack Trail is the perfect hike to find the crown jewels of the ebony jewelwing damselfly. Go find one today! You won't be disappointed!

Credits: <https://dragonflyguid.com/ebony-jewelwing/>, Wikipedia

Photos: Sue Yost, Wikipedia, <https://dragonflyguid.com/ebony-jewelwing/>



Features

Hey There Little Caterpillar

By Marilyn Blanton

Hey there little caterpillar
You're eating more everyday

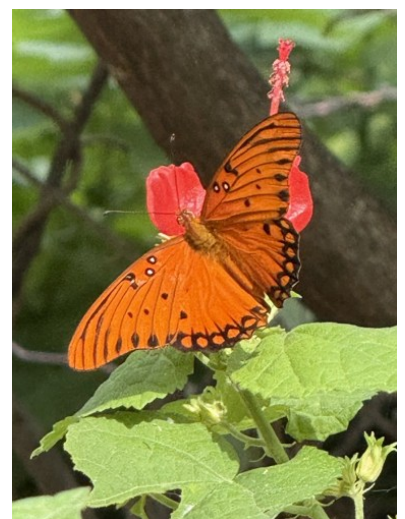
You're growing so fast
You're on your way

What an adventure awaits for you
You'll totally transform into something new

Your change begins when you form a chrysalis
It's what's called metamorphosis

From moving about on your many legs, munching leaves
To flying with wings, sipping nectar to meet your needs

Hey there little caterpillar, I wish you well on your way
I hope to see you as a butterfly one day



The Gulf Fritillary

The Gulf Fritillary, *Agraulis vanillae*, is a fast-flying, medium sized butterfly with three-inch wings. The female is slightly larger than the male. The butterfly has elongated forewings with a beautiful pattern flashing bright orange with black veins and spots. The undersides of their wings have silver spots and streaks that are often said to look like stained glass. Their color pattern is a signal to predators that they are toxic.

Gulf fritillaries are common in the southern United States, especially in Texas and Florida. Their range also extends through Mexico. They prefer sunny open areas near grasslands and woodlands. Their host plants are members of the Passiflora family. The adults feed on various flowers' nectar.

Features

Lookout Stations, Lost Gardens, and Arthurian Legends— Hiking the South West Coast Path

By Jerry Hamby

After reading Daphne du Maurier's 1938 novel *Rebecca* years ago, I envisioned Cornwall, the peninsula on the southwest tip of England, as an untamed, ominous landscape—oppressive woods, jagged cliffs, and treacherous shorelines. Such details suit the Gothic mood of the novel and its characters' turbulent lives, but after spending a week in Cornwall, I have revised my view of this complex region to include rolling pastures, crystal blue water, sunny skies, and a coastline dotted with historic towers and castle ruins. Every location I visited was filled with natural beauty.

My travels in Cornwall were part of a Road Scholar trip devoted to hiking the English countryside, and joining me on this adventure were my wife Susan and our good friends Rick and Lisa Travis. After exploring the Cotswolds for a week, our group of sixteen travelers relocated to Camelford, a base that provided easy access to sections of the South West Coast Path, England's second-longest National Trail (at 630 miles). Along the way we visited picturesque villages and unique cultural sites and witnessed spectacular views of the Celtic Sea. Our guides for the two-week adventure were Ian and Simon, who kept us on track and shared illuminating background on the places we traveled.

Our first outing was a gentle 4.5-mile hike that circled the dramatic peninsula of Pentire Headland before crossing a public beach at Polzeath. Early on we passed the Rumps, a twin-headland promontory and site of an Iron Age fort or cliff castle. A few hundred yards offshore is the Moulds, a conical island that is home to breeding colonies of Atlantic puffins (*Fratercula arctica*) and other seabirds.

As the path approached the coastline, we passed a “sheep creep,” a gap at the base of a drystone wall that allows sheep to pass through to graze on clifftops while preventing cattle from doing the same. As in the Cotswolds, we hiked along and crossed over dozens of stone walls, the oldest of which have existed in Cornwall for more than 4,000 years. The unique design of “Cornish hedges” incorporates a herringbone pattern that channels water and maximizes the strength of the local slate used in construction. An earthen core between the two faces allows vegetation to take root.

Many of the walls were covered with English stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*), a mat-forming succulent flecked with small white star-shaped flowers. Among the wildflowers



Simon crossing a stone wall



Sheep creep



Lookout Stations, Lost Gardens, and Arthurian Legends— Hiking the South West Coast Path (cont.)



Common spotted orchid

I observed was spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), which added occasional splashes of purple to the coastal pastures. The most prolific plant I observed was sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*), a compact evergreen perennial whose long stems support globes of bright pink flowers. Its Latin species name, *maritima*, means “of the sea.”



Sea thrift on stone wall



St. Enodoc Church
(Sinking Neddy)

Before reaching Pentire Point, we stopped at a stone plaque commemorating the poet Laurence Binyon, who composed “For the Fallen,” his tribute to the casualties of World War I, while sitting on these cliffs. We ate lunch near the gravestone of another poet, John Betjeman, who is buried in the churchyard of St. Enodoc Church. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, sand dunes buried the 900-year-old church, earning it the nickname “Sinking Neddy.” To maintain its status as a functioning parish, the church was required to hold yearly services in the sanctuary, which participants entered through the roof. By 1864 the structure was unearthed and restored, and the dunes surrounding it were stabilized.

After a day and a half of light walking through the fishing village of Port Isaac and the seaside town of St. Ives, we looked forward to a more vigorous hike the following day. The six-mile trek went from Trevone Bay to Padstow, passing close to the Round Hole, a sunken sea cave with an eighty-foot drop. Formed over thousands of years by pounding waves and gradual erosion, the cave eventually collapsed. Because there is no physical barrier around the hole, people occasionally fall to the bottom after venturing too close to the edge, and in 2021 a woman

fell to her death. One of the most scenic spots was Stepper Point, which overlooks the Camel Estuary (a tidal river valley) and the Doom Bar (a treacherous sandbank). For much of our uphill hike to the headland, we were guided by the Daymark, a nineteenth-century stone tower that, unlike a lighthouse, guides boats only during daylight. Originally painted white, the tower now shows only hints of a lime-washed exterior.

Today’s search and rescue operations on Stepper Point are coordinated a short distance from the Daymark at NCI Padstow, one of more than sixty lookout stations that provide “eyes along the coast” of England and Wales. Volunteers with the National Coastwatch Institution spot vessels and individuals in distress and initiate rescues with His Majesty’s Coastguard. As our group approached the lookout, a watchkeeper invited us inside

Lookout Stations, Lost Gardens, and Arthurian Legends— Hiking the South West Coast Path (cont.)

the facility, a self-sufficient station that runs entirely on solar and wind energy. When NCI Padstow was restored in 2005 (after being abandoned for twelve years), the building was expanded to accommodate state-of-the-art equipment, including high-powered web cameras and monitors that provide views of the estuary hidden below the point.

As we hiked above Hawker's Cove, we learned that Red-billed Choughs (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) had been spotted nesting beneath the cliffs. A cultural icon of Cornwall, the bird appears prominently on the Cornish coat of arms but is endangered locally due to egg poaching and habitat loss. The genus name *Pyrrhocorax*, literally “fire raven,” refers to Choughs’ bright red legs, feet, and bills. According to medieval legend, Choughs started fires by dropping burning twigs onto thatched roofs, a belief that resulted in their persecution. Fortunately, modern conservation efforts have helped protect this iconic species and have allowed its population to rebound.

On our fourth day in Cornwall, our group traveled to the southern coast of Cornwall, where we were given a choice of activities—hike from Dodman Point to Mevagissey or visit the Lost Gardens of Heligan, a 200-acre botanical estate that was restored after being abandoned for seventy years. Susan and I decided to forfeit a day of hiking to explore this popular natural site.

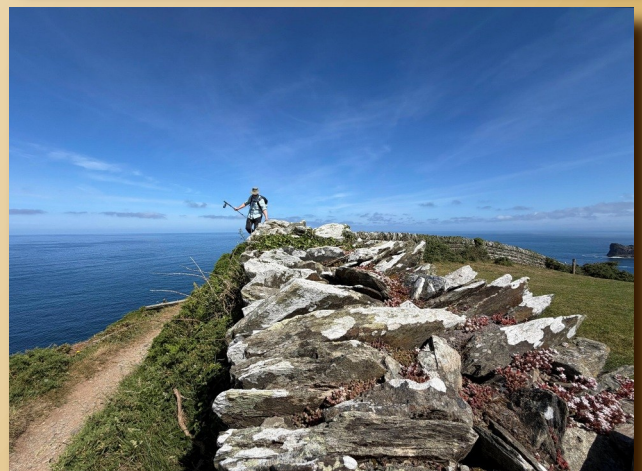
Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, the gardens were maintained by the Tremayne family, but during World War I, the gardens were neglected, and at least nine of the estate's gardeners died in battle. Restoration of the gardens, which began in the 1990s, took ten years and involved species recovery and the rebuilding of historic structures, including a wall of bee boles, brick recesses that hold straw skeps (traditional domed beehives).

Our visit to the Lost Gardens of Heligan began with a guided tour of the North Garden, which includes rhododendron-filled “Pleasure Grounds” and kitchen gardens. After eating lunch at the 1850s Steward's House (prepared with locally sourced produce), we explored less formal parts of the estate. For instance, In the Lost Valley, a steeply sloped area, we discovered the “Wibbly Wobbly Tree,” a 300-year-old European beech tree (*Fagus sylvatica*), along with hundreds of gigantic subtropical plants.

After a light day of walking through historic gardens, we were ready to tackle our last hiking adventure, a five-mile trek along the Celtic Sea. Early on we saw several Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*), gray and white seabirds that are closely related to albatrosses. Their common name translates to “foul gull,” a reference to their tendency to spit oily stomach fluids at predators. An hour and a half into the walk, we rested near the Lady's Window, a natural archway formation that frames the ocean on top of Trevalga Cliffs.



Bee boles



Footpath overlooking the Celtic Sea
(photo by Susan Hamby)

Lookout Stations, Lost Gardens, and Arthurian Legends— Hiking the South West Coast Path (cont.)

Our hike leader Simon warned us that the hike would involve elevation changes of up to 1,400 feet, so we were prepared for our last descent, which passed through Rocky Valley, a steep-sided slate canyon carved by the Trevillet River. In addition to preserving the narrow ravine's biodiversity, the National Trust, which owns the property, protects Bronze Age rock carvings and historical ruins upstream from the trail.

After arriving in Tintagel, Susan and I enjoyed a picnic lunch in the garden of another National Trust site, the Old Post Office, which, despite its name, was originally a fourteenth-century yeoman's farmhouse. We ended the day with one of the cultural highlights of our trip, a self-guided tour of Tintagel Castle, a medieval fortress at the end of a rugged headland. The site is accessed via a 230-foot bridge spanning a deep gorge. Comprised of two cantilevers that nearly touch in the middle, the bridge is paved with 40,000 hand-cut pieces of Delabole slate. Completion of the bridge in 2019 allowed visitors to approach the island from the perspective of medieval inhabitants (before a land bridge from the island crumbled into the sea).

The headland at the far end of the bridge reveals layers of post-Roman history, mostly in the form of crumbling walls and foundations, some of which date to the thirteenth century. At the far end of the island, a sculpture by Rubin Eynon, *Gallos*, hints at the legendary aspects of Tintagel Castle. A cloaked figure leaning on a large sword recalls ancient Cornish rulers, but many observers believe the sculpture represents King Arthur, the mythological character who purportedly repelled Saxon invaders.

Our return to London the following day provided a brief encounter with another mythical site and one of the most mysterious monuments in the Western world, Stonehenge. With our two-week adventure coming to an end, we could experience it only from a distance as our coach drove across the Salisbury Plain. That glimpse of Stonehenge was a dramatic coda to an in-depth exploration of the English countryside and made me eager to plan my next adventure.



Final descent to Tintagel

*Photographs by Jerry Hamby
unless noted otherwise*

Tweet of the Month

From Sue Yost, class of 2017

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Rain crow. Storm crow. Common folk names for this bird in the southern United States, probably referring to the bird's habit of calling when a storm is threatening to move in. It's better known, however, as the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

The Wikipedia entry has an excellent description: "Adults have a long tail, brown above and black-and-white below, and a black curved bill with yellow especially on the lower mandible. The head and upper parts are brown and the underparts are white. There is a yellow ring around the eye. It shows cinnamon on the wings in flight. Juveniles are similar, but the black on the undertail is replaced by gray. The adults show no sexual dimorphism, and thus the males and females can't be told apart by plumage."



They are a large bird, about the size of a Blue Jay. Their length measures around 11 inches with a wingspan of 16 to 17 inches. They breed in deciduous woods and feed in dense shrubs and trees. Their diet consists mainly of insects, especially tent caterpillars and cicadas, but also some lizards, eggs of other birds, and berries. Cuckoos also may catch insects in flight. They will catch and eat the spotted lanternfly. According to Texas A&M's Texas Breeding Bird Atlas, "The Yellow-billed Cuckoo and the Black-billed Cuckoo are two of the few North American birds that readily eat hairy caterpillars." As a result, they will sometimes gather around outbreaks of insects, including invasive spongy moth caterpillars.

Wikipedia notes that "They nest in a tree or shrub, usually up to 2–12 feet above the ground. The nest is a flimsy platform of short twigs placed on a horizontal branch. The three to four eggs are incubated for 14 days or less. The chicks are able to climb about with agility at seven to nine days of age. At about this same time, the feathers of the chicks burst out of their sheaths and the young can fly. The entire time from egg-laying to fledging may be as little as 17 days."

The Texas A&M Breeding Bird Atlas continues: "Many of the world's cuckoos are brood parasites but the North American species (including the Yellow-billed Cuckoo) rarely lay their eggs in other birds' nests."

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo typically spends the winter months in South America. It is usually present in Texas only from April to October. They are common nesters at LLELA and can be heard frequently in the woods around the pavilion. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is a secretive bird



Yellow-billed Cuckoo (cont.)

that is hard to observe and can vanish into the foliage, so you need to familiarize yourself with its song. This consists of one short repeated note that resembles a *coo* sound and gets deeper as the call progresses.

The Texas Breeding Bird Atlas notes, “Although it is still a common bird in Texas, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo’s numbers are diminishing. Like many neo-tropical migrants, it has declined considerably throughout its range in the past thirty years. . . Several factors combine to explain this decline. The most apparent reasons are the loss of habitat (both on its breeding and wintering grounds) and forest fragmentation, which is believed to cause increased predation on nests. It also suffers from modern farming practices that eliminate hedgerows, fencerows, and similar overgrown areas. The disturbance of mature riparian woods in the west caused it to be placed on the Blue List of species of special concern. The continued decline of such habitats poses a concern for the long-term success of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and other species that depend on them.”

Other threats to the Yellow-billed Cuckoo population are pesticide use (as we Master Naturalists know, the decline of an insect predator in turn means an increase in unwanted insects) and the introduction of man-made objects in the natural habitat. These birds often nest in fruit orchards, which introduce agricultural pesticides into their habitat. There have been observations of loss of balance, egg thinning, and increased pesticide concentrations. These birds have also been observed to collide with man-made objects such as radio towers, tall buildings, and airport structures during migrations at night, posing a risk to their migrating population. The Lights Out Texas program benefits this and other night-migrating birds.

Hopefully you will get cuckoo about Cuckoos on your next bird hike.



Credits: Wikipedia. Texas A&M Breeding bird survey, Cornell

Photos: Wikipedia, Audubon

This Month's Contributors



Becky Bertoni



Marilyn Blanton



Pat Bragg



Brynne Bryan



Delia Croessmann



Jerry Hamby



Michael Hatch



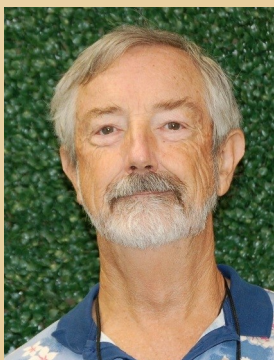
Bryan Lewis



Jonathan Reynolds



Susan Richmond



John Thomlinson



Fran Witte



Sue Yost



Betty Zajac



Karen DeVinney

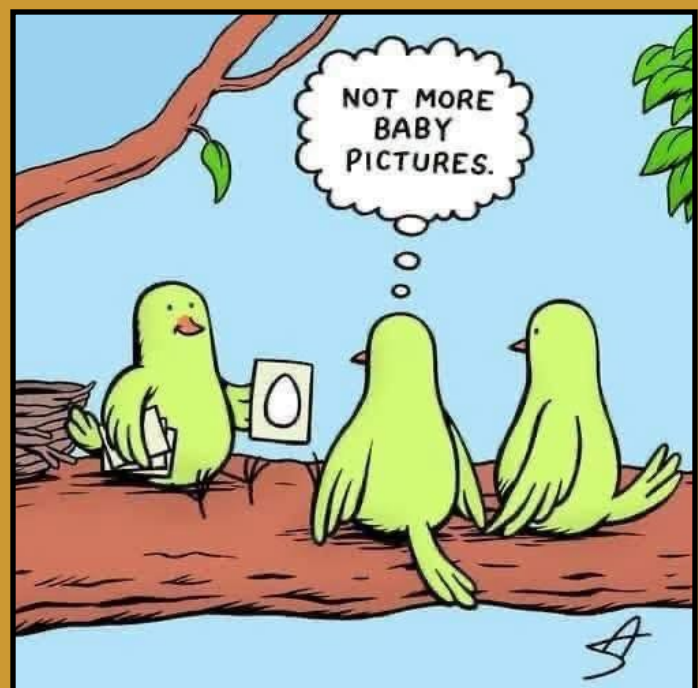
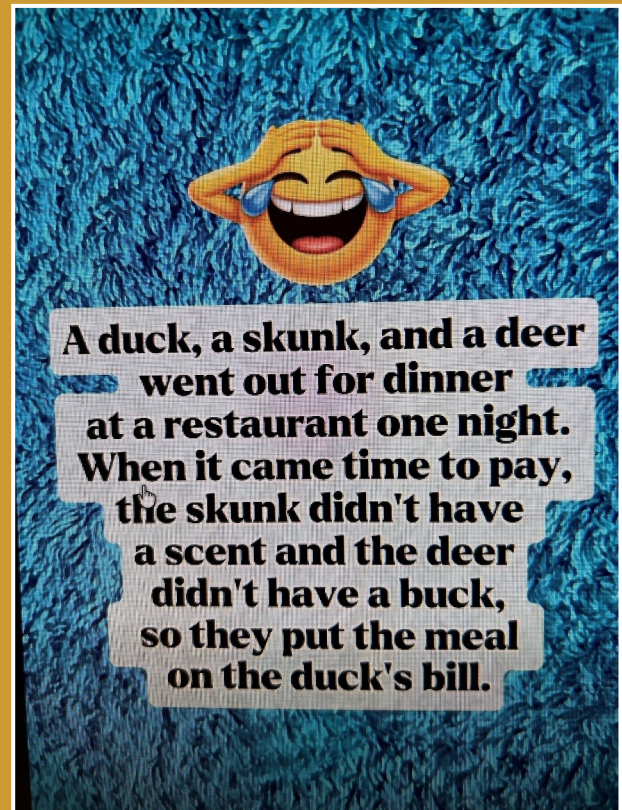


Sue Hudiburgh

*And a big thanks to
Brynne Bryan,
Karen DeVinney
and Sue Hudiburgh
for proofing!
(Mary Morrow was at
the beach!)*

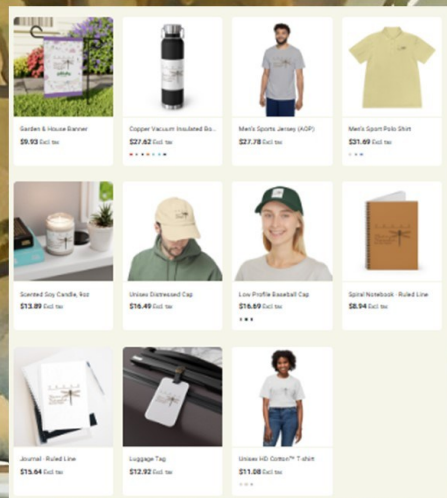
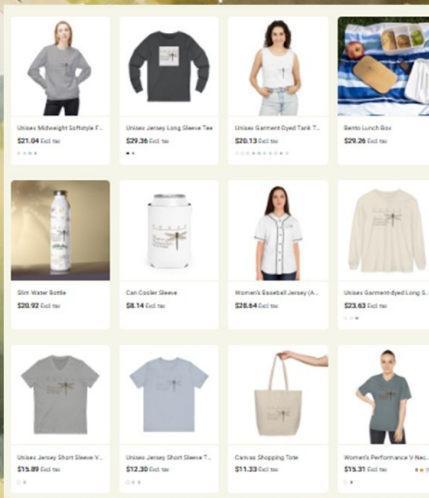
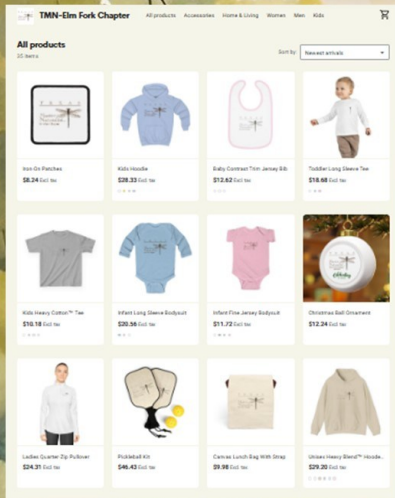
Almost the Last Word

Funny Finds From Sue Yost and Jonathan Reynolds!



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>



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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

August 2026 submissions are due
by:

Monday, August 10th



Who We Are



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

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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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Hulcher Services Building B, Suite 151
611 Kimberly Drive
Denton, TX 76208
940-349-2883