

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™
Elm Fork Chapter



Naturalist News

September 2026 Volume 26, Issue 9



We're on the Web: www.txmnn.org/elmfork

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasMasterNaturalistElmFork/



Naturalist News

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Tammie Walters, Designer
 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:

A young male Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*)
 by Emily Markel, 2026 trainee



Double-striped bluet (*Enallagma basidens*)
 by Jonathan Reynolds

Announcements

Education That Inspires Action!

GARDEN AND NATURE EXPO 2026

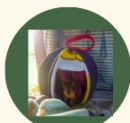
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 3

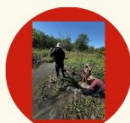
Denton County Administrative Courthouse
1 Courthouse Drive, Denton



ACTIVITIES



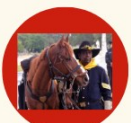
Animal
Rehab



Environmental
Support



Science with
Attitude



Buffalo
Soldiers



Helping
Nature

Family Friendly and Free



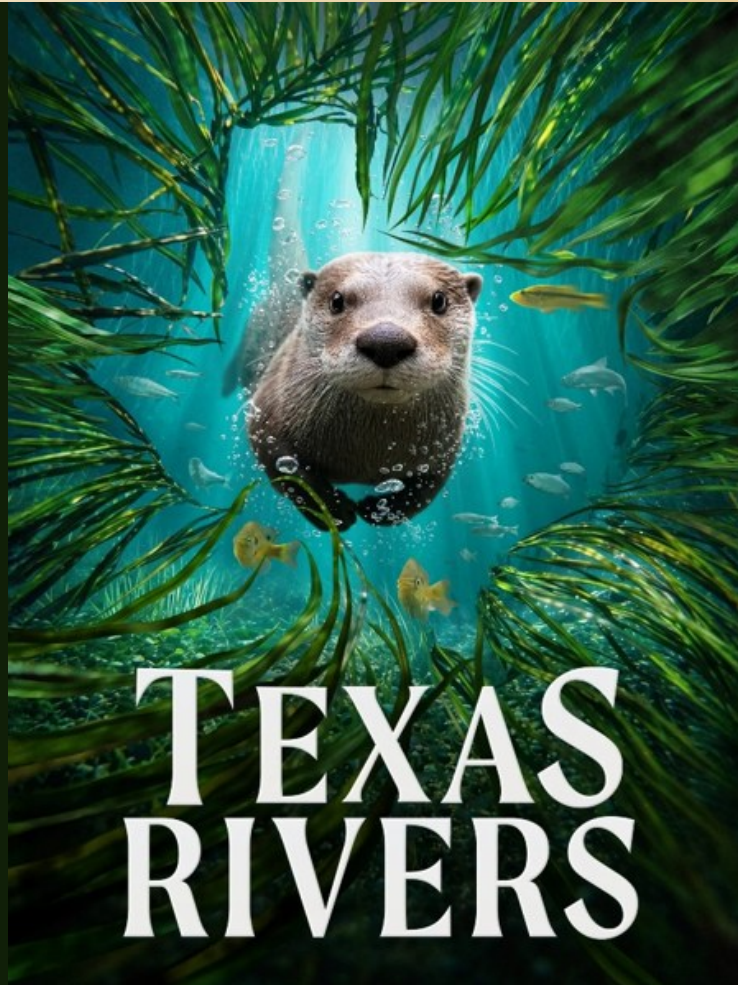
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www.dcmga.com

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

Announcements



September 22, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

Deep in the Heart II Texas Rivers

MOVIE IN CONCERT - World premiere

Moody Performance Hall

2520 Flora Street, Dallas, TX 75201

Experience the world premiere of Deep in the Heart II: Texas Rivers, featuring an original score by Noah Sorota performed with live orchestra. This new documentary film directed by Ben Masters and narrated by Ethan Hawke celebrates the rivers and waterways that define the Lone Star State. Featuring a soundtrack recorded by the Dallas Chamber Symphony, the film will hit theaters across the state on September 25th. Richard McKay conducts.

[Deep In The Heart II Texas Rivers - Dallas Chamber Symphony](#)

\$39-75 reserved seats

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

September Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, September 17th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Denton County Administrative Courthouse • 3rd Floor Conference Room
1 Courthouse Drive • Denton

Presentation:

Hidden Partners: The Role of Fungi in Plant Growth

By: Bob Richie

Urban Forager

TMN - North Texas Chapter

This presentation will explore the symbiotic relationship between plants and fungi. We will look at how this relationship was created and how both sides benefit. We will also explore what that means to us, as humans, living on planet Earth.

Bob Richie is a Dallas native who has raised almost every insect, mammal, reptile, plant and fungus that can be kept legally, and some that cannot. He likes birds, bugs, plants, fish, fungus, herps, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, fly fishing, anthropology, archaeology and more. An amateur naturalist from an early age, Bob has spent much of his life outdoors.

As an urban forager, Bob teaches classes about edible and medicinal native plants and regularly appears on spring schedules at local nature preserves, parks and environmental centers.



Bob is a certified Texas Master Naturalist, a past president of the Trinity Valley Beekeepers Association, and a past board member of the North Texas Mycological Association. He is the father of two grown children, an avid bicycle rider and commuter, and a registered yoga instructor.



Upcoming Chapter Meetings

October Chapter Meeting and Presentation

Thursday, October 15th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Denton County Administrative Courthouse • 3rd Floor Conference Room
1 Courthouse Drive • Denton

Presentation:

John Bunker Sands Wetland Center: A Nature-Based Solution

By: Kayleigh Bucur, Executive Director
John Bunker Sands Wetland Center
www.wetlandcenter.com

Learn how this leading water conservation area plays a crucial role in the way 2.3 million North Texans get their drinking water—and how this wetland also provides a vital habitat for an impressive diversity of bird species.



Kayleigh Bucur is the executive director of the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, the educational component of a unique public-private partnership between the North Texas Municipal Water District and The Rosewood Corporation. Located within a 2,000-acre constructed wetland designed to naturally polish and recycle water before it returns to Lavon Lake, the wetland center serves as a living laboratory for water conservation, wetland science, and environmental education.

Kayleigh holds a bachelor of science degree in wildlife and fisheries conservation from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and brings more than a decade of experience in environmental education and nonprofit leadership. Her career has included work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trinity River Audubon Center and the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas. She is also a Texas Master Naturalist and Northeast Texas Master Birder and is passionate about connecting people to nature while building environmental literacy and stewardship.



Outside of work, Kayleigh enjoys camping, hiking and birding with her husband and their two dogs, Pudge and Ladybird. She is an avid reader who is working toward a Goodreads challenge of reading 26 books this year, enjoys gardening and experimenting with a carnivorous plant terrarium, and is a beginner stained-glass artist. She and her husband are currently building an adventure truck to explore remote landscapes across the United States.



Awards and Recognition

August 2026

2026 Recertifications

Nancy Blakney
Jan Hodson
Alice Mankoff
Dan Lemons
Jonathan Reynolds

Class of 2023
Class of 2002
Class of 2016
Class of 2022
Class of 2014



250 Hour Milestone

Robin Franks
Monica Kelley

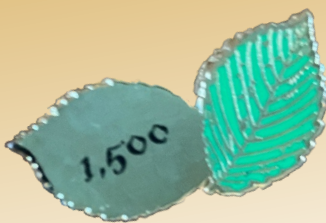
Class of 2025
Class of 2024



500 Hour Milestone

Jerry Clark
Joe Rogers

Class of 2016
Class of 2025



1500 Hour Milestone

Sam Bufkins

Class of 2023



Awards and Recognition

August 2026



2000 Hour Milestone

Renee Province

Class of 2008

Tammie Walters

Class of 2020

8000 Hour Milestone

Carl Patrick

Class of 2010



*Congratulations
everyone!*



Field Notes in Focus



Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) at Rocky Mountain National Park,
by Jonathan Reynolds

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training



BAT FEST

Bat trivia, prizes + food!

Discover the vital role bats play in our world and embark on a bat walk at dusk!

Free + limited to first 50 sign-ups!



THRIVE RECREATION
CENTER, LEWISVILLE



OCTOBER 24TH



4PM to DUSK

RSVP by
Oct 17th



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal-opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University system, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts Cooperating.

Inside Outside News

Advanced Training



September 30, 2026
6:30 p.m.

Perot Museum of
Nature and Science

Fifty years after the startling discovery that monarch butterflies spend winters in the forests of Mexico, photographer and National Geographic Explorer Jaime Rojo reveals this winged wonder of the insect world in new ways with never-before-seen visuals. Tag along with conservationists and citizen scientists who are helping this species avoid catastrophic threats, all through Jaime's beautiful photos and videos.

This is third part of the National Geographic Live Speaker Series being offered at the Perot Museum in 2026, which is applicable to our geographic area. There is a fee to attend. Registration can be found on the website link: [National Geographic Live: Jaime Rojo – Perot Museum of Nature and Science](#)



Aquatic WILD Workshop

Saturday, October 17th • 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Elm Fork Education Center • 1704 W Mulberry Street • Denton

Professional development for anyone who works in education with children or the public, including teachers, homeschoolers, informal educators, and scout leaders

Project WILD invites you to explore and share the fascinating world of aquatic wildlife and ecosystems using fun, hands-on educational activities. You will experience engaging TEKS-aligned activities while networking with other educators.

- Workshop Credit

Aquatic WILD K-12 guideparticipants receive:

- 6 hours TEA-approved CPE and TEEAC
- Texas-specific resources

Please dress for indoor and outdoor learning. Bring a sack lunch and a refillable water bottle. Snacks and beverages are provided.

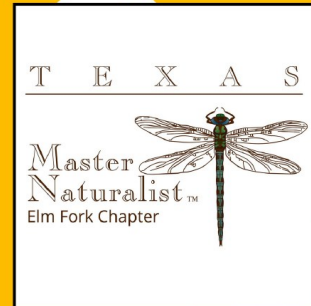
\$35 Pre-registration is required. Registration deadline 10/1/26.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/education/wild/aquatic-wild-workshop-elm-fork>

Inside Outside News

Volunteer Opportunities

**WE
NEED!
YOU!**



Outreach needs your help!

Help fulfill our mission statement “to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas.”

Sign up to be a face of our chapter at an upcoming tabling opportunity!

Pollinator Palooza

September 26, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Clear Creek Visitor Center, 3310 Collins Road, Denton

Monarch Market

October 10, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Corinth Nature Preserve, 3901 Corinth Parkway, Corinth

Denton Dig It! History Fair

October 17, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Denton County Historical Park, 317 W. Mulberry, Denton

Denton Market

November 14, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

317 W. Mulberry, Denton

See the Members Area calendar to view each opportunity and sign up on SignUpGenius.

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

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 conserving the natural resources of the area.

General maintenance volunteers have multiple service opportunities 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 service.

Natural resource volunteer projects could include bluebird box monitoring, firebreak preparation, invasive species management & habitat restoration.

This opportunity is available year-round and provides a flexible schedule. No minimum hours per week are required. Campsites are not included.

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

Minimum age of volunteers: 16 (if under 18, volunteer will need to print a parental release form and bring a completed copy to the park). Criminal background check is required for non-TMN members.

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

Inside Outside News

Volunteer and AT Opportunities

DFW Wildlife Coalition

Looking for Volunteers

- Volunteer for a two- or three-hour shift
- Once a week from your home
- Six hours of online training

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



*Be sure to check [Plan Your Week](#)
and the [Elm Fork Chapter Website](#) and [Members Calendar](#)
for More AT and Volunteer Opportunities!*



Elm Fork Chapter




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[Donate](#)

[What's New?](#)
[Volunteer Service Projects](#)
[Member's Area](#)

Today

< >

September 2026

Month

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30 10am Ray Roberts L	31 9am LLELA Monday 9am Clear Creek Wc 10am Ray Roberts L	Sep 1 8am Green Acres W 9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Trailhee 10am Ray Roberts L	2 9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Wednes 9am AT - Making Ta 10am Ray Roberts L	3 10am Ray Roberts L	4 10am Ray Roberts L	5 9am AT - Early Bird 10am Ray Roberts L 10am LLELA - Guidi
6 10am Ray Roberts L	7 Labor Day 9am LLELA Monday 9am Clear Creek Wc 10am Ray Roberts L 1pm Roots for WI	8 8am Green Acres W 9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Trailhee 10am Ray Roberts L 11:45am AT - Watch 12pm AT - RTMN Tu	9 9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Wednes 10am Ray Roberts L	10 9:30am Board Meeti 10am Ray Roberts L 7pm AT - Beneficial	11 10am Ray Roberts L	12 8am 2nd Saturday V 9am AT - Furneaux I 9am AT - Erosion Cc 10am Ray Roberts L 7pm AT - Prairie Rer
13 9am AT - Guided Hill 10am Ray Roberts L	14 9am LLELA Monday 9am Clear Creek Wc 10am Ray Roberts L	15 8am Green Acres W 9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Trailhee	16 8am AT - Fire Field I 9am Beulah Acres A 9am LLELA Wednes	17 9am Chapter Meeti 10am Ray Roberts L	18 10am Ray Roberts L	19 10am Ray Roberts L 10am AT - Drawing I

Wild About LLELA

Sue Yost, Class of 2017



Antlions

Many plants and animals make their home at LLELA. I have shared the unlikely dragons (green dragon plants), tigers (six-spotted tiger beetle), and rattlesnakes (rattlesnake master plant), but never have I mentioned the "lions" of LLELA. Lions? Can you guess exactly who they are? They are not the long-maned lions of the African safari, but an insect called the antlion.

In North America, they are also called "doodlebugs." They got this nickname because of the winding trails they leave in the sand, which look as if someone has been doodling. They are beneficial insect predators whose larvae dig funnel-shaped sand pits, which are about one to two inches wide. They are



used to trap insects, mainly ants (hence the name "antlion"). Larvae have globular abdomens and sickle-shaped jaws that help them capture their prey. They finish their life cycle through complete metamorphosis. The larva develops through several instars. The pupa forms a sand-covered cocoon in spring or summer. The cycle repeats when the adult

antlion emerges from the cocoon. They are typically active in the evening. Adults can reach about 1.5 inches in length. They resemble drab-colored damselflies with long, narrow wings. Adults primarily feed on nectar and pollen. They lay eggs in sandy soil and the cycle continues.



Antlions thrive in dry, sandy areas, and are often found under shelters like roof overhangs or large trees. A good place to find them at LLELA is around the Miner-Porter Cabin on the Cottonwood Trail. The kids become fixated on observing the sand pits.



Content credit: Wikipedia

Photo credits:

Sue Yost

farmanddairy.com

freepick.com

ourbreathingplanet.com

Features



Be Prepared

By Darla Bostick, 2026 Trainee



I grew up as a Girl Scout. The motto “Be Prepared” has seen me quite well through my life. Mom was a leader, so was I, as well as my sister, and today my daughter is a leader. In fact, I met my husband through Explorer Scouts, but that’s another story.

Recently I volunteered at Green Acres in Flower Mound in an effort to get my service hours as I move along my internship with Texas Master Naturalists. We all know to come with a hat, water bottle, sunglasses and sunscreen, but I have something else to add to your list of “must haves.”

As I was watering the Monarch Butterfly station I learned a good lesson. I had tossed down the hose to nab a photo for my i-Nat. When I picked up the black hose, I didn’t see it was covered with ants and soon my hand was also totally covered with fire ants. (I never was one to wear gloves—I like to feel the dirt.)

Luckily Becky Bertoni, who is the organizer of that project was right next to me and quickly unzipped her fanny pack to pull out some spray Benadryl. I never knew it came as a spray. It is an anti-itch cooling spray and comes as small as two ounces.

As I type this a week later, I still have some nasty welts on my hand that may leave a longtime remembrance of that morning.

A few days later I headed over to Global Spheres for my weekly training session but this time I was prepared. We are able to go almost two hours earlier than the session to take advantage of the Beulah Acres Gardens as well as the cooler (ha) temps.



This time I had a fanny pack well equipped with a burn spray, bandaids, a tube of triple antibiotic gel, a bandana—never leave home without one—lip balm and room for a piece of bark I kept for a small spade as I garden. There is also room for my phone for those i-Nat pics.



Today at home I got another bite of some kind and thought maybe this little account might help you as you delve into nature with the Naturalists.

Features

Children of the Night—Appreciating the Bats of Texas

By Jerry Hamby



Red sandstone in Quartermaster Formation, Palo Duro Canyon SP



Dr. Christopher Mathewson at Longhorn Cavern SP



Mexican free-tailed bats

As a teenager I explored the rain caves of Palo Duro Canyon State Park. As I crawled through the narrow chambers, my flashlight sometimes caught the distinctive shape of a bat pressed against the wall. Given its small size and solitary nature, it might have been a canyon bat (*Parastrellus hesperus*), one of twelve confirmed in the canyon. Those ephemeral caves still wind through the porous red sandstone of the Quartermaster Formation, but because of their unstable structure, their location is no longer shared with park visitors.

In 2018 I observed another small solitary species, the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), at Longhorn Cavern State Park. A photo of the Texas Master Naturalists who accompanied me captures their excitement as our guide, the late Dr. Christopher Mathewson, shines a light on a pair of bats above us.



Tricolored bat, Longhorn Cavern SP

Unfortunately, not everyone gets as thrilled at the prospect of encountering bats, but through increased public education, ecotourism, and conservation, the public is learning to appreciate these misunderstood and maligned creatures.

A turning point for Texas bats occurred by chance in 1980 when the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) rebuilt the Ann W. Richards Congress Ave. Bridge in Austin. Because the new concrete box beams mimicked the conditions of natural caves, thousands of Mexican free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) established residency beneath the bridge. To combat a wave of misinformation and panic, Dr. Merlin Tuttle relocated the headquarters for Bat Conservation International (BCI), which he founded, to Austin. Forty years later the city supports dozens of bat-related programs, including the annual



Children of the Night—Appreciating the Bats of Texas (cont.)

Bat Fest and bat-watching boat cruises, that attract 140,000 people every year to witness the largest urban bat colony in the world, estimated to consist of 1.5 million bats.

TxDOT's support of bat research began in the 1990s and led to designs and retrofits of bridges to accommodate bats' roosting preferences. TxDOT's "Texas Bats" brochure features seven colony bridges from San Antonio to San Angelo. I have visited three of them, including the Waugh Drive Bridge in downtown Houston. Unlike most Mexican free-tailed bats in the state, the 250,000 residents of the Waugh Drive Bridge do not migrate to Mexico in the winter, making them part of the largest year-round colony in Texas. When I attended an on-site presentation in 2015, a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks (*Buteo lineatus*) flew directly into the spiraling swarm and snatched bats in midair. The birds' aerial acrobatics added unexpected drama to the sunset emergence.



Observation deck, Waugh Drive Bridge



Old Tunnel SP

A greater threat to the Waugh Drive colony, however, came in 2017 with the floodwaters that accompanied Hurricane Harvey, which dumped 35 inches of rain into Buffalo Bayou. As the water rose, an estimated 100,000 bats drowned, suffered from hypothermia, or were trapped under the bridge. The historic 2021 winter freeze also set the colony back, but researchers believe the population has rebounded. On Friday evenings from May through August, the observation deck along Allen Parkway fills with people eager to hear the presentation made by volunteers of the Gulf Coast Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists.

While urban bat watches are a convenient way to learn about bats, more immersive experiences can be found in isolated natural areas of Texas, particularly the Hill Country. Old Tunnel State Park, ten miles southeast of Fredericksburg, is one of the most popular destinations. From May through October, visitors can get a closeup view as three million Mexican free-tailed and three thousand cave myotis bats (*Myotis velifer*) emerge from a 920-foot abandoned railroad tunnel. While most migratory colonies in Texas serve as nurseries, Old Tunnel SP is a roosting site; the open-ended structure makes the temperatures and humidity levels unstable, so the location is unsuitable for birthing and raising pups.



Children of the Night—Appreciating the Bats of Texas (cont.)

The most spectacular bat-watching experience in Texas occurs twenty miles east of San Antonio. Owned by Bat Conservation International, Bracken Cave is home to the largest bat colony in the world—more than fifteen million bats—and is one of the largest collections of any mammals on earth. The cave entrance is at the bottom of a natural sinkhole, and two chambers extend 650 feet back. Because they provide vertical drop space, protection from predators, and ideal incubator conditions for pups, such limestone structures often attract bats. Not surprisingly, the highest concentration of Texas colonies occurs in the limestone caves and sinkholes of the Edwards Plateau.

BCI purchased Bracken Cave and the surrounding 4.7 acres in 1991 and partnered with the Nature Conservancy in 2013. As a result both organizations now own and manage almost 3,400 acres of surrounding land. With the added involvement of the City of San Antonio in 2014, the partnership permanently blocked residential development that would have threatened the bats' flight path and foraging habitats. On a typical summer night, Mexican free-tailed bats from Bracken Cave travel sixty miles out to consume an



Corn earworm moth

estimated 100 tons of corn earworm moths (*Helicoverpa zea*), agricultural pests that have become resistant to many pesticides. Last year I observed a corn earworm moth in my backyard, drawn, no doubt, to my wife Susan's vegetable garden.



Susan Hamby
on top of Bracken Cave

Because Bracken Cave is not open to the public, a visit requires membership in BCI plus an additional fee that goes toward habitat restoration and cave maintenance. The public visitor season goes from mid-May to mid-September, and evening programs sell out far in advance. When I was there in 2016, the two-hour event culminated with a hike to the top of the cave, allowing participants to stand directly beneath the bats' flight path. Such access has since been curtailed, and options for watching the bats return to the cave before dawn are more limited.

Twenty years ago I witnessed an early morning "reverse batnado" at Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico. Unlike the swirling vortex of an evening emergence, when bats create an updraft to gain altitude, their pre-dawn return occurs in waves as bats fold their wings and dive hundreds of feet directly into the cave (reaching speeds of fifty miles an hour while in free fall).

Even as public awareness of bats improves, hazards to various species continue to increase. The greatest biological threat is white-nose syndrome (WNS), which is caused by the fungus



Bat emergence



Children of the Night—Appreciating the Bats of Texas (cont.)

Pseudogymnoascus destructans and weakens the animals during hibernation. Most Texas bats, including Mexican free-tailed, appear to be safe from the disease since they do not hibernate, but up to thirty percent of native species could be susceptible to this fatal disease. Habitat loss, climate change, and wind turbines present more widespread danger to Texas bats.

Continued research, including the contributions of citizen scientists, is crucial to understanding and responding to the needs of bats. The Elm Fork Chapter of TMN participates in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Acoustic Bat Monitoring Project, which collects data on bat populations through the use of acoustic monitors.

Project Managers Mary Morrow and Samra Bufkins have recently scheduled public outreach events on bats.



Clarissa Molina leading a bat walk at LLELA

In August I attended a Bat Walk at Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area. After hearing a brief presentation about North Texas species, participants searched for bats on the trail. Armed with acoustic monitors, four leaders recorded high-frequency echolocation calls. I served as a sweep, keeping my assigned group together, as Clarissa Molina led us down the Cicada and Cottonwood Trails. When we emerged from the woods, we spotted three or four vesper bats (superfamily Vespertilionoidea) flying overhead. These evening bats typically stay hidden in the foliage and cavities of trees, so seeing even a few bats provided a thrilling ending to the event.

Public education is key to conserving endangered species in Texas and elsewhere. When I traveled to Costa Rica in January, I attended a program sponsored by the Night Wings Project that allowed me to observe five bats caught in a mist net, including a pygmy round-eared bat (*Lophostoma brasiliense*). Watching our guide examine this tiny animal, which weighed less than half an ounce, I realized how fragile it was and was reminded of why we need to protect such vulnerable species.



Pygmy round-eared bat

Photographs by Jerry Hamby

Tweet of the Month

From Sue Yost, Class of 2017

Grackles

Grackles are large Blackbirds that have a reputation as bullies at feeders. There are three types of Grackle birds to look for across America: Common, Great-tailed, Boat-tailed. All three can be found in Texas, but the Boat-tailed is a south Texas bird found along the Gulf Coast.



Common Grackles: These medium-sized, lanky birds have glossy dark feathers. Their heads look blue or purple in the light, in contrast to their bronzed iridescent bodies. In some parts of the southeast, their bodies are more purple and/or green. Also check for a long tail, a long bill, and yellow eyes. The Common Grackle is larger than a Red-winged Blackbird but smaller than an American Crow. Common Grackles can be spotted from Canada and the Great Plains to the southeastern states. Juvenile Common Grackles are brown with dark-colored eyes. Female Grackles are a bit smaller than males with duller plumage.

The Great-tailed Grackle has bold yellow eyes that seem to stand out against their dark silky-looking feathers. Like the Common Grackle, in the sunlight, they appear to have a blue/purplish color tone. However, their broad, fan-shaped tails set them apart. Their heads are flat, not rounded like Boat-tailed Grackles. These birds are common from Texas and Oklahoma to southern California. The female Great-tailed Grackle is dark brown above and lighter brown on the chest, with a light brown eyebrow.



Boat-tailed Grackles are large, lanky songbirds with rounded crowns, long legs, and fairly long, pointed bills. Males have very long tails that make up almost half their body length and that they typically hold folded in a V-shape, like the keel of a boat. Boat-tailed Grackles are a strictly coastal species through most of their range. They live along the eastern coastline, all of Florida and down to the Texas coast. Along the western Gulf Coast, Boat-tailed Grackles have dull, brownish eyes. Along the Atlantic Coast and the Gulf Coast west to Mississippi, Boat-tailed



Tweet of the Month (cont.)

Grackles have bright yellow eyes. They are supreme omnivores, feeding on everything from seeds and human food scraps to crustaceans scavenged from the shoreline.

Grackles will eat many types of grain and seeds, including cracked corn and sunflower seeds, as well as peanuts. They also eagerly devour suet. In summer, these birds also eat insects, berries and small animals such as frogs and mice, and they will grab nestlings from open nests. If your feeders are taken over with Grackles, they likely are migrating. (Grackles are found year-round throughout most of the United States. Birds that breed in the northern part of their range migrate short distances for winter.) Switch to feeders such as tube feeders with smaller perches that are more difficult for them to feed from. They also do not like safflower seed.

Grackles like to congregate in parking lots. Why? They are opportunistic feeders eating food tossed onto the pavement. There are also plenty of insects in parking lots to gobble up.

Though they are each large dark colored birds, Grackles are not related to Crows. Grackles are in the Icteridae, or Blackbird family, which includes Orioles and Cowbirds. Crows are corvids, more closely related to Jays and Magpies.

Next time you see a Grackle, take the time to really look at it. They are beautiful, misunderstood birds.



Credits: Lori Vanover; Birds and Bloom; All About Birds

Photos: Sue Yost, All About Birds

This Month's Contributors



Gale Bacon



Becky Bertoni



Darla Bostick ★



Delia Croessmann



Jerry Hamby



Bryan Lewis



Emily Markel ★



Austin Martinez ★



Mary Morrow



Fran Witte



Sue Yost



Betty Zajac



Brynne Bryan



Karen DeVinney



Susan Richmond

★ *We have submissions from **three 2026 trainees** in this month's issue!*

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

Almost the Last Word



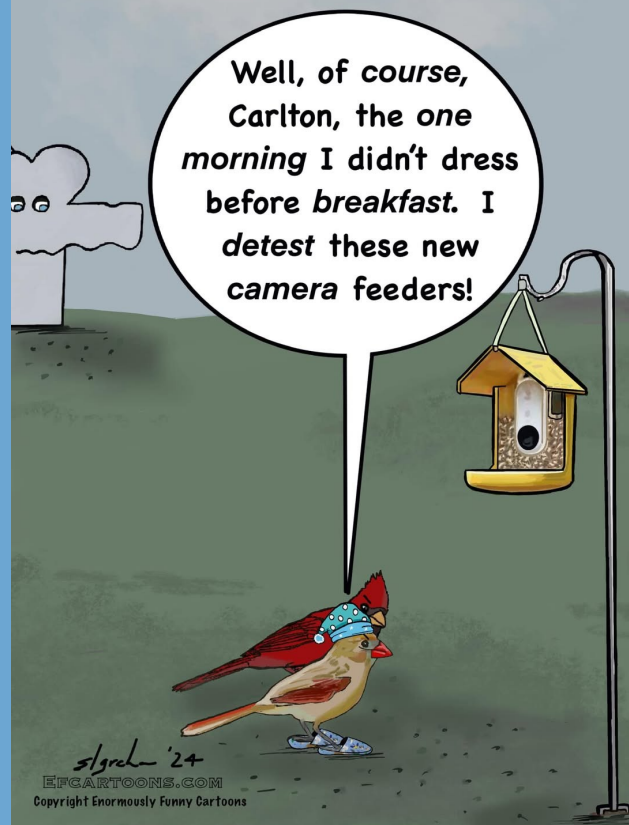
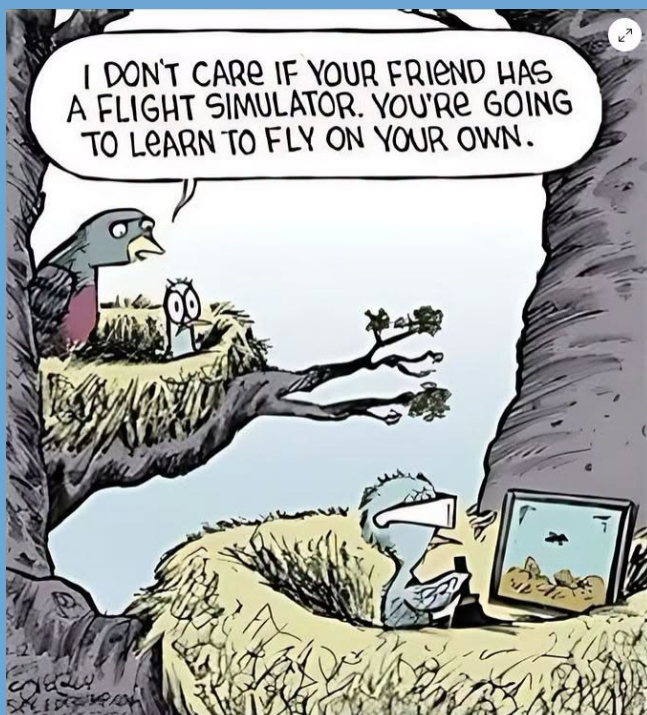
Thursday, September 17, 2026

*This is how & when we get public donations for training
and state meeting scholarships.*

Our goal is \$1,500

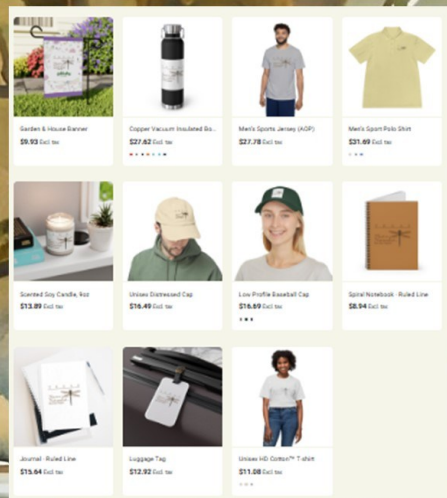
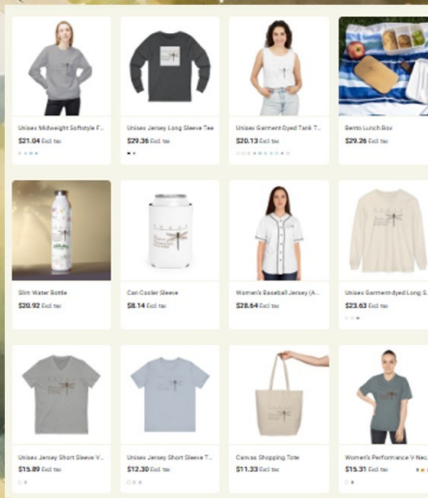
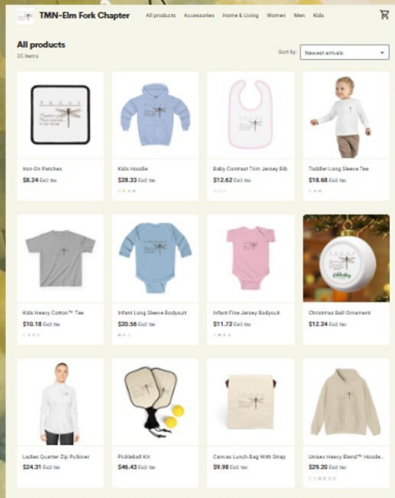
<https://www.northtexasgivingday.org/organization/ElmFork>

Funny Finds From Sue Yost!



Almost the Last Word

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



* New *
items

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



**WE ARE ON
INSTAGRAM!**

*Please follow us at
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

October 2026 submissions are
due by:

Monday, October 5th



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

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Regular Monthly Chapter Meetings

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

Chapter meetings are open to the public.

Board Meetings

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

Monthly board meetings are open to members.

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

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

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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