



The CHACHALACA

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If you don't belong to our listserv and don't attend meetings, you're probably unaware of the to-do over background checks and the "hold harmless" form.

All TMNs will be required to have a background check. It will be handled by the TEC and some of the details are still not settled, but we will need a background check whether we expect to work closely with children or not. I don't like it, but I do understand it. It reflects the world we now live in. It will cost \$10, and we will be putting out more information as we get it.

We all signed a general "Release from Liability" form when we joined the Master Naturalist program. We often sign similar releases when we volunteer at sponsored events. Various laws also protect volunteers from liability when acting in good faith. TP&WD and the TCE came out with a new form for release from liability. It differed from the old form by including a release from liability for personal negligence. Of course, many of us declined to sign it.

After much discussion, the sponsoring agencies have withdrawn the form pending further review. The old form will continue to be used and the new form will probably be changed. One positive outcome was the opening up of various communications channels among the chapters. The various agencies were made aware that we are volunteer, not employees. I suspect they are not comfortable with this knowledge.

Be prepared to participate more as our organization matures. Accept the responsibility of running our own show. It's part of growing up.

Leo Garrett

RGV MASTER NATURALISTS

This chapter is an affiliate of the Texas Master Naturalist program jointly sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

Officers

President Linda McGonigle

Vice President

Administrative Secretary Frank Wiseman

Recording Secretary Deanna Schaeffer

Treasurer Diann Ballesteros

Standing Committees

Education/Adv. Training Donna Berry

Projects Tim Colglazier

Public Relations / Communications

Joe Lee Rubio

Newsletter

Leo Garrett

Changes

Our Officers Roster is a little different this quarter. Again.

Laura Duvall was forced, by health issues, to resign as President.

Linda McGonigle automatically filled the office of Vice President.

We are now seeking a volunteer to serve the remaining portion of the Vice-President's term.

JUST THINK ... IN ONE YEAR

Time seems to have flown by...peregrine falcon style. Just a year ago, I was anxiously awaiting my graduation as a TMN, trying to get in my last required hours volunteering here and there and everywhere! Little did I know what was in store for me. All the incredible wonders which would touch my life as well as the fine bunch of humanity connected to those wonders has made this year one which I shall always remember.

Many thanks to those who gave me the opportunities to touch a REAL bat, to taste the salt at Sal del Rey, to point out the differences in order to distinguish one warbler from another, to hold and watch a tiny sea turtle crawling out to sea on its perilous journey, to listen to me over and over as I would try to learn the names and characteristics of native plants, to laugh at phalaropes spinning 'round and 'round, to have my photo made holding a majestic raptor, to demonstrate how deep to dig the hole in order that the plant sleeve would be covered, to view a butterfly with transparent wings, and to guide me through the night in the deep So. Texas thicket, along the water's edge to hear the croaks that I had been instructed to listen for in species and numbers. There are so many more, and some of these experiences are beyond description.

As I continue to discover my role in our "big blue marble" and more like in our four county area, I realize that I'm starting to give opportunities, in my own small way, to others in experiencing the wonderment of nature. I am the one showing how to clean, prepare and taste the prickly pear, passing the sea urchin from my hand to one much smaller, demonstrating how to prepare native seeds for planting, informing Island visitors about bans on shelling, passing out posters on how to avoid drowning in rip currents, explaining why I keep cut fruit on my fence top, arguing with land developers about dozing up acres of native habitat, and much more.

As our chapter grows, and IT IS growing, I realize the impact of our existence. What a wonderful job this chapter is doing. It was very evident when our group was represented at the Regional Meeting in Robstown in early April. We have an abundance of talent and energy within our group. Our chapter is full of teachers, leaders and we are ALL doers. Some members may not feel that their knowledge and skill is of importance to others and many are very humble about their expertise, but we have all graduated from the same great training and continue to broaden our scope in a myriad of directions. Venture out and find your niche. Don't be fearful as there are those who will take your hand and guide you along. Don't be afraid to ask. This group is one of the most sharing and caring. Yes, there are thorns out there, things that sting, dirt under the fingernails, and enough sweat to create a great pond, but at the end of the day, it's that great sense of accomplishment and pride along with smiles and wonderment of our community which carry you to the next event. (or is it project, Donna?)

Naturally submitted, Linda McGonigle

President-RGVCTMN

GIL QUINTANILLA SPEAK ON BUTTERFLIES

By Frank Wiseman

Fellow RGVCTMN member Gil Quintanilla spoke at our March 8th general meeting. Gil presented an excellent power point program, showing many of our local Valley butterflies. He answered all of the questions thrown out by audience members as he presented each picture. Gil has shown what a true Master Naturalist can do after finding the niche of nature that interests each of us.

Gil showed his family garden along with his children and wife enjoying the many butterflies that are attracted to his well-landscaped back yard. Gil has planted many of the especially attractive butterfly plants, among which are the Butterfly Weed, Pavonia, Runyon's Water Willow, Mexican Trixis, Crotons of various types, Shrubby Blue Sage, Salvias, Lantanas, and others.

Gil has learned that taking pictures with his digital camera is a plus because of the few really good shots he can get out of the hundreds that he tries to capture. He readily advises the use of a good digital camera to all who are interested in this type of photography. Bad pictures are easily erased and good ones saved.

Gil showed the audience the Monarch Butterfly through all of its different stages, from egg to caterpillar to

larvae to full fledged butterfly coming out of the chrysalis. This type of photography required patience on his part and a diligence to a great hobby.

Gil has become a great supporter of the local NABA Butterfly Park, which is located south of Mission and near Bentsen Park. He has aided in much of the park's endeavors to revegetate a large cleared land area that reaches down to the Rio Grande River. If you have not visited this new area, it would make a great outing for anyone interested in viewing all species of butterflies that frequent our area. The Rio Grande Valley has more butterflies than any other part of the United States. Many former "birders" are also becoming good "butterflies". Another plus is that many of the Mexican butterflies easily cross the river and enjoy the Texas side of the river also.

We thank Gil for a rewarding learning experience and showing us the special talents he has learned about butterflies.

Gil will be presenting another program on Butterflies at the Harlingen Museum's "May's Month of Nature" exhibits. His presentation will be on May 8th at 2:00 p.m. This will be a good chance for all to hear him speak again with added pictures and information.



RGVCTMN LEADS RAMSEY PARK TOUR

By Frank Wiseman

On Tuesday, March 8th, Diann Ballesteros led a native plant tour of Ramsey Park in Harlingen. Aiding in this endeavor were Dick and Sharon Roesler and Frank Wiseman who all answered questions from the group as they spread out along the main trail.

Diann led the group of 20 people to the pond area in the front part of the park first to show them the spot where many local birds can be seen quenching their thirst. Also it is a great spot for the migratory birds to hang out before leaving on their trip north. In this spot the Master Naturalist working crew this last year planted a grouping of American Germander that has spread nicely. The area is represented with many of our local native trees and shrubs. There is a nice showing of Anacua, Retama, Turk's Cap, Texas Lantana, Skeleton Leaf Daisy, and several of our native vines and wild flowers.

The group awaited late arrivals in the parking lot and then proceeded to tour the Loop Area of the park. Diann pointed out the several attractive points of the different trees and shrubs, offering many a sample sniff so that smell and touch could be associated with each different plant. The Texas Torchwood and the Sierra Madre Torchwoods were pointed out as belonging to the citrus family, and each tour member easily sniffed out the smell of lemon or lime.

A grouping of Hachinal at the first curve was displaying a grand display of their yellow flowers. These plants were seen as a good hedge plant for any garden or yard. Across from these was the Texas Persimmon with its tasty fruit that birds love. The Palo Verde was distinguished from the Retama at this point and samples of the leaves were passed around. Both of these trees were brilliantly displaying their yellow spring flowers to the delight of all. A good photo op for some of the tour members.

Along the way others plants that were discussed were the Colima, Blackbrush, Anacahuita, Tenaza, Mesquite, Tepeguaje, Guayacan, and Granjeno.

By the time we reached the butterfly garden that was put in the park by Eagle Scout Izzy Rami-

rez the butterflies were coming alive in the warm spring morning air. This area has the popular Padre Island Mist Flower and offered another good photo op for many with their cameras.

We went along to show the newly planted Runyon Garden that RGVCTMN members cleaned and planted during the months of January and February of this year. In this spot the group saw the Esenbeckia tree that was donated by RGVCTMN member Gene Lester. Most of the other plants in this garden spot were rescued from the Alton Gloor area in Brownsville or purchased at the Valley Nature Center. Drew Bennie also donated several of the plants including the Runyon's Water Willow. Some other TMN members donated plants such as the Yuccas, Pigeon Berry, and Pink Mint. The middle of the pathway was planted with native flower seeds that will hopefully appear one of these days in the near future. The garden trail has been newly mulched and the group admired the signage all along the trails. Our Chapter has tried to acquire as many plants as possible that bear the name of Robertii or Runyonii. We will happily accept more plant donations from everyone. TMN Trainee David Junkin has offered to rout a sign on wood for our Runyon Garden. We thank David for his efforts and the sign will be placed very soon.

The Red Salvias were showing their colors and the Goldfinches have discovered them to be a tasty seed treat. They climb up and down the stems of each plant looking for a seed here and there.

Further up the trail the White Plumbago, Coastal Germander, Crotons, Coral Bean, and Oregon Bush were starting a return to their former looks after the winter freeze. This tour was a good time to explain the reason we believe in Native Plants for our local yards and gardens as our plants are used to a freeze every so often and make a quick return to life as before.

By the end of the tour we saw the cool spring morning turning to a more heated day and the group headed out for refreshments and a chat about many of the plants seen on the tour. We offer our thanks to Diann for leading a great tour for our Chapter.



Diann Ballesteros is shown leading the tour of Ramsey Park. This was the last of the season, as Ramsey Park is now closed due to construction of Wild Bird Center facilities.



*The
Runyon
Garden*

Our Chapter has tried to acquire as many plants as possible that bear the name of Robertii or Runyonii. We will happily accept more plant donations from everyone. .

Brownsville Bird Festival!

Bat Kisses Bird!



EWBC Coastal Expo !



L-R:

Suzanne Mounsey

Ostos

Beth-Michele Wargo

Jesus Franco

It was

C-C-Cold!!!

Weslaco Spring Festival!



I want to compliment the Texas Master Naturalists who turned out to volunteer at the first annual SpringFest. TMNs ... did an outstanding job building the children's garden trail ... Yvonne Kautsch

Quickies

We have a Historian!

Cathy Budd has agreed to be our historian. she needs pictures of any kind. Printed, or digital, scanned , etc. They can be on a CD or you can e-mail me pics at our rgvctmn@aol.com address. You can send hard copy stuff to my home address also. 1917 Aragon Dr., Harlingen, TX 78552. I will get it all to Cathy.

If any of you have old newspaper articles that we could copy , we would certainly appreciate those also.

Anything that has to do with our TMN chapter and can be used in the Historian's files, would be great.

Thanks, Hope to hear from many of you.

Frank Wiseman

May, "Nature Month" at the RGV Museum, Harlingen, TX

We'll be presenting programs and selling plants! We need all the help we can get.

Get in touch with Tim, colglaziertim@aol.com, and come out!

Frog Listeners Needed!

The RGVCTMN has taken on a new project. It is long-term but not difficult. We need people to listen to frogs.

As you all know. Frogs are very sensitive to their environment and give early indications if something is amiss. We were all surprised to find out just how little is known about the types and distribution of frogs and toads in the Rio Grande Valley.

The state has a program for recording and collating data, but someone has to actually collect information from the field. This where we come in. The Texas Amphibian Watch program has one unit devoted to listening for frog calls. About once a month or after rains, folks go out and listen for the different frogs and record the estimate of the type and number of frogs heard along with weather and conditions information. The worksheets are then submitted to TP&WD for analysis.

Some of our members have already received the training and signed up. We need as many observers as possible. So, if you think you would enjoy an occasional walk and listening session that would increase the body of scientific information, call or email Donna Berry and let her know. We'll line up another class! Happy listening!

RGV CHAPTER, TEXAS MASTER
NATURALISTS

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