



The Chachalaca

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RGV TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

THIS CHAPTER IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM JOINTLY SPONSORED BY TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION AND THE TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by M. Lee Brown

Spring is here with plants in bloom, trees filling out and birds building nests. Master Naturalists are digging into their areas of interest with renewed excitement. Our Chapter membership has grown to 183 members, each generously offering their enthusiasm, time and expertise to our partners throughout the area.

This is a big year for our Chapter as we celebrate our 15th Anniversary of providing a Texas Master Naturalist perspective to the Valley through citizen science, outreach and education. There are so many exciting things going on I don't know where to begin.

Barbara Peet, 2nd Vice President, is leading a Field Trip Committee to schedule member field trips throughout the year. Barbara and Sally Robey, Coastal At-Large Member, organized two trips on March 28 for the UTRGV Coastal Studies floating laboratory, the Ridley. Plans are already in the works for additional field trips.

The 2017 New Trainee graduation is on April 11. Please plan to attend for an opportunity to meet the members of this enthusiastic, knowledgeable and talented class. I offer sincere gratitude to New Class Director Joni Gillis and the Education Committee for guiding the new trainees through the program. The community will benefit tremendously from the many talents our newest members.

For our fundraiser this year, the Chapter is sponsoring the Silent Auction at the Annual Meeting of Texas Master Naturalists in Corpus Christi on October 20-22. I encourage members to attend the meeting for three days of fun and learning. Members wishing to present at the meeting must have proposals submitted to the state office by June 1st. Linda Butcher is chairing the Silent Auction Committee and I ask that meeting attendees plan to volunteer while at the meeting.

My primary goal as President is to facilitate volunteer and training experiences that fuel inspiration and the drive to learn. I am looking for volunteers to serve as Project Ambassadors at our partner sites. The Project Ambassador acts as a liaison between our members and the partner site. The main duties are to ensure new volunteers are trained and to serve as a Chapter contact for the site. Please contact me if you are interested in this opportunity.

Be sure to check the Events Calendar on our website (www.rgvctmn.org) for upcoming events, advanced trainings and workdays. To have a training or event posted, please contact Communication/Outreach Director Tami Bulow or Jimmy Paz, Webmaster,

Enjoy the spring weather and have fun in your endeavors!

M. Lee

Honoring Frank Wiseman's 5K Volunteer Hours

(Excerpts from Anita Westervelt's speech)

I first met Frank Wiseman when he delivered a brilliant PowerPoint presentation on native plants at WOVE.

The very creativity of Frank's PowerPoint first captured my attention. Then, I was mesmerized with his knowledge of plants -- plants I'd never heard of but knew I wanted to know more about.

My first impression of Frank, during that presentation, was that he must be a mini-god in the organization and therefore, unreachable.

After his presentation, I was further amazed that he was friendly and willing to share his knowledge!

Many of you have known Frank much longer than I have. For those of you who don't yet know him, first and foremost, **Frank is an educator**. Much of his professional life as a language teacher and counselor was spent overseas at various installations teaching in the DoD school system. He is a fellow veteran, having served our nation proudly in the United States Army.

Understandably, he has a multitude of fascinating stories.

Around about the turn of the century -- that's this century, early 2000s -- before the inception of Rio Grande Valley Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist, Frank was one of about a dozen people who first started clearing thorn scrub at Harlingen's Hugh Ramsey Nature Park.

This group of people, several of whom are still active in the chapter, shared information with each other, researching and studying native plants and habitat on their own and putting that knowledge to use in specialty gardens they designed and maintained.

During that time, Frank was instrumental in starting our chapter. So you could say, without Frank and his friends having the courage, patience and tenacity to tackle the process and paperwork to establish a chapter, we wouldn't be here.

Frank is an historian. From the very beginning of their work in Ramsey, Frank has documented, dated and saved thousands of photographs, first on CD-ROMs, advancing to jump drives and now on social media, showcasing his current team of Ebony Loop volunteers each week on the chapter's Facebook page. He's maintained a history of Ramsey Park and our chapter. He's willing to keep up with technology and like a Taumalipian Olive tree, "adaptive" to change.

But Frank is more than Ramsey Park, even more than the chapter itself, joining, serving as leadership, newsletter publisher, mentor, instigator and advocate in many sister organizations.

As a Texas Master Naturalist, Frank has held most positions of leadership in the chapter's administration and the only member who has continually served on the chapter's board of directors.

He is a go-to person to lead presentations whether to interested community organizations, our own training classes, at specialty events, and fill-in speaker at a moment's notice when ever asked.

Frank is a risk-taker. As our Ebony Loop volunteer team guru, Frank is always willing to lead impromptu Road Trips that are great fun wherever we end up -- cemeteries, busy highway verges, behind the sandy dunes at Boca Chica and gas station tacos for Christmas lunch then crashing through an unexpected, rapidly in-coming tide to avoid becoming stranded on the

beach. Another thing not many of you know, is that the trunk of Frank's car is better stocked than a big box store's tool section. But no matter the task, Frank is always ready and willing.

The overarching awesomeness of this learned gentleman, is his passion to preserve his homeland -- the nativeness of the Rio Grande Valley, and his willingness to nurture our chapter members and preserve our chapter.

Most significantly, and why we are honoring Frank, he was the first chapter member to garner 4,000 hours, and now, Frank Wiseman has attained the significant milestone of 5,000 Texas Master Naturalist volunteer hours.

Congratulations, Frank!

Frank Wiseman -- 5,000 Volunteer Hours

Leader
Educator
Historian
Native Plant Expert
Adventurer



TMN State Meeting 2016

by Jim Najvar

The annual TMN State Conference is a great venue for participation in advanced training activities, field trip experiences, general session presentations and opportunities to network with other TMN colleagues. Training programs and field trips are one to four hours in length with some day-long field experiences. Topics reviewed below include:

1. **Geology and Soils of Texas** presented by Christopher Mathewson – Four hour session
2. **The Lichens: A brief introduction to one of nature's intriguing symbioses**-presented by Dale Kruse – Four hour session
3. **Bryophytes, The Forest Under Your Feet**-presented by Dale Kruse – Four hour session

Geology and Soils of Texas

Early in elementary education we learned that, “there are three basic rock types:

1. ***Igneous: derived from fire and the cooling of molten earth materials***
2. ***Sedimentary: derived by settling-out of rock particles that have been weathered and transported***
3. ***Metamorphic: derived by the alteration of rock materials by high pressure and temperature.” (Mathewson, Christopher C., Common Rocks-A Guide to Identification of Common Rocks).***

Adults and children seldom remember the other basics of geology-whether rocks are igneous, sedimentary or metamorphic, each type of rock has unique features related to how rocks form under various extremes of heat, weathering, pressure, and sedimentation. Dr. Christopher C. Mathewson, former Dean with Texas A & M University, provided a four hour program which not only focused on rock formations but upon the importance of rocks in society, noting that “Each of us will need 32796 pounds of salt, 27810 pounds of iron ore and 1.09 million pounds of stone, sand, and gravel in our lifetime”. His presentation included samples of rocks. For those who were interested, he and his daughter took participants on a field trip the next day which expanded upon the concepts discussed during his presentation.

The Rio Grande Valley is a delta formed from millions of years of erosion. The only rocks found around here are transported from other locations. Primarily granite which forms jetties on South Padre Island and Port Mansfield and comes from the region around Marble Falls. Caliche, used for our roads and highways, finds its way here along the inter coastal waterway from upper south Texas or by truck from areas north and west of McAllen. The basic minerals from rocks from millions of years of erosion continue to find their way along the Rio Grande River and its tributaries making the Rio Grande River Delta one of the richest agricultural regions in the United States.

Lichens-Bryophytes – Complex Life Forms

I continue to be in awe with the complex nature of the plants around us. Even more complex are the simplest of organisms- they may seem plant-like but are not. Such life forms are lichens which result from a symbiotic partnership between a fungus and an alga. Other complex life

forms are the seedless terrestrial plants which include mosses, hornworts or liverworts. Dale Kruse provided an excellent presentation on each these topics; however, the programs were not for the beginner. I had a difficult time following the discussion based upon my cursory knowledge on the topics. He did however arose my interest and caught my attention with the fact that lichens and mosses are around us more so than we realize. Like any observation, you need to know some basics and pay attention to the detail. The presentation sparked my interest and taught me that when spending time on a field experience it is not only important to bring a pair of binoculars but also another basic tool (which should be in the tool kit of every naturalist and keen observer), the magnifying lens. With this tool one can truly observe the complexity of any plant, plant-like organisms, lichens and the seedless terrestrial plants.

Invitation to the Class of 2017

by Anita Westervelt



Chapter member **Jimmy Paz** is our brilliant **Web Master**. He designed the colorful artwork on the home page, the entire Web presence and maintains it all.

I know you're all familiar with the link "**TMN Report Hours**," and I'd like to invite you to travel through the rest of the Web site.

In the **top links**, check out the **Galleries** tab where you'll find **Quarterly Newsletters**. **Sharon Slagle** was our faithful newsletter editor for many years. **Lou Osborne** took over the position in 2016. Looking through past issues will give you a look at many of our members who you will eventually meet and will add to your knowledge base as you continue your Wednesday night classes.

Also under **Galleries**, you'll find **RGVCTMN Articles**, articles written by chapter members and published

throughout the Valley in various newspapers. **Galleries** also gives a list of the current year's general meeting speakers at **Speakers 2017** and archived images of events at the **Photo Album** drop down.

On the **Home Page**, one of the top links, **Sabal Webcam** is a live streaming at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary bird feeder that our chapter sponsors.

At top left, the icon, "**f My Page**," is a direct link to the chapter **Facebook** page.

Also on the **Home Page**, check out **Recent Posts** at the column on the right for **Anita's Blog** and **P. Dodson's** butterfly videos for informative stories and videos.

In the **Events Calendar**, click on the event to get more information about the individual activity.

The **Volunteer** link takes you to a list of **Approved Partners** and **Field Trips** and other drop downs.

Interesting Links contains a list of local native plant growers at **RGV Plants**; the **Local Links** tab provides links to some of our partners' Web sites. You'll also find links to state and local TMN information under **Interesting Links**.

WOWE 2017: A GREAT SUCCESS!

by Carolyn Cardile

Thank you, Chapter Members and Trainees,

The enthusiastic participation and support of RGVCTMN volunteers at the 22nd Winter Outdoor greatly contributed to the success of this event! Here is some information about the Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo.

A brief history of WOWE: Our chapter began actively volunteering at the Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo in 2014. This event offered an excellent opportunity for our trainees and members to earn both volunteer and AT hours. The following year St. Andrew's Church, sponsors of the Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo for 20 years, began looking for someone to take over this annual nature exposition. Fortunately, Cristin Howard, Director of the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center, saw WOWE as an opportunity to increase visitation at the birding center and to raise money for the center's educational programs. The SPI Birding and Nature Center sponsored WOWE for the first time in 2016.

How success was measured: The goal was to reach or exceed the attendance and income of WOWE 2014 while moving the event from the convention center to the birding center. The move to the birding center was successful the first year, and WOWE reached and exceeded its financial and attendance goals in 2017.

What TMN volunteers did: Members of our chapter were involved in all aspects of the WOWE: planning, preparation, and all 5 days of the Expo.

- **Event Volunteers:** More than 60 different people from our chapter and training class volunteered on one more of the 5 days of WOWE. There were 25- 30 chapter members working there every day. Because so many people helped, it is impossible to mention everyone by name. However, I want to sincerely thank everyone who helped in any way. All of you working together contributed to WOWE's success.



Mary Bennet and John Yochum are taking a break from a busy day. Mary volunteered and John did two excellent presentations.



Renee Rubin worked as a room monitor and introduced the speaker, Norma Friedrich. Our room monitors did an outstanding job working with the speakers and collecting the surveys.



Capt. William Little was one of many volunteers who answered question at the administration desk.



Alicia Cavazos and Kimi Jackson collected admission money and put wrist bands on each attendee.



Andi Fazioli sold raffle tickets.

- Presenters: TMN has some amazing presenters! This year 50% of the presentations at WOVE were given by Texas master naturalists!



Elisa Velador, Texas Wildlife Association, shared a hands-on skins and skulls exhibit with adults and kids.



Linda McGonigle gave an outstanding Nature Journaling Workshop. There were 2 other workshops this year as well- Tracking and Photography.

- Birding Center personnel: Cristin Howard, Director of the SPI Birding and Nature Center, and three members of the staff and the president of the birding center's board are either a trainee or a member of our chapter. They volunteer their time beyond their working hours to make this event a success.



Cristin Howard- Director of the SPI Birding and Nature Center: Cristin is enjoying time with the birds in Jonathan Wood's Raptor Project. The raptors were on exhibit between the live raptor shows for two days. What a treat to be close to those beautiful birds.



Javier Gonzalez, naturalist at SPI Birding and Nature Center, is at the monarch butterfly exhibit table. Linda Poovey and Patti Daigle were very generous with their personal time to volunteer before and during WOVE.

- Bird and plant walks: SPI volunteers and TMN members both led bird walks.
- Non-profit organizations: Several TMN members worked either as employees or volunteers at exhibit tables for Sea Turtle, Inc., Coastal Studies Lab, Laguna Atascosa, Bay Area Birders, Shell Club, and the Texas Wildlife Association.
- Steering Committee: There are 15 people on the steering committee. Some are members of the community who attend St. Andrew's Church; some are Winter Texans; and some are employees or volunteers at the birding center. Four people from the birding center, Over 50% of the steering committee's members are also members of our TMN chapter. Here are some examples of the work our committee does:



Marilyn Lorenz did an excellent job of getting both publicity and paid advertising for WOWE. She was also a presenter and led bird walks.



Barbara Peet made the survey we used to get feedback about each presentation, and Norma Trevino spent many hours entering that information into a data base.

Other committee members planned the program, invited speakers, worked with vendors and exhibitors, ordered food and supplies, prepared the raffle, worked on funding through grants and donations, printed programs, worked on publicity and advertising, and much more.

Summary of Chapter Data & Accomplishments for 2016

by Jolaine Lanehart, Membership Director, VMS Coordinator

- Ø 159 paid members
- Ø 132 members reported hours during 2016
- Ø 95 members met recertification for 2016
- Ø 24,366 volunteer service hours reported (compared with 20,635 in 2015) and a total of 187,133 hours since chapter inception
- Ø 2,367 AT hours (compared with 2,727.5 in 2015) and a total of 28,660 hours since inception
- Ø **Milestones awarded in 2016**
 - 100 hour chapter pin – 22
 - 250 hour pin – 20
 - 500 hour pin – 10
 - 1000 hour pin – 10
 - 2500 hour pin – 1
 - 4000 hour pin – 2
 - 5000 hour pin – 1
- Ø Made a successful transition to VMS!
- Ø 2016 class
 - 29 Members
 - 26 Graduates
 - 21 Certified
- Ø 489 individuals have been trained since inception of chapter and 377 of those have certified (77%)
- Ø Recertification for 2016 (the Guadalupe Bass pin) awarded to the following members:

Class of 2002	Class of 2008	Class of 2012	Class of 2015	Class of 2016
Joe Lee Rubio	Jim Najvar	Marilu Alf	Bob Binney	Patty Daigle
Frank Wiseman	Lou Osborne	Frances Barrera	Tamie Bulow	Andi Fazioli
	Julia Osgood	Alicia Cavazos	Velia Chavez	Rita Galloway
Class of 2003	Cheryl Owen	Gail Dantzker	Kit Doncaster	Carol Gluntz
Tommie Ellium	Virginia Vineyard	Gloria Nelson	Marie Farchik	Angelica Jackson
		Adrian Ramos	David Foerste	Kimi Jackson
Class of 2004	Class of 2009	Cris Wise	Mary Jarvis	Sandi Jaeger
Drew Bennie	Mary Jo Bogatto		Tim Jarvis	Ayla Jaramillo-Truan
Jorge Garcia	Sherry Borrayo	Class of 2013	Marilyn Lorenz	William Little
Linda McGonigle	Linda Butcher	Mary Bennett	Deborah McCoy	Marsha Ralston Wood
Jimmy Paz	Carolyn Cardile	Linda DesRosiers	Pete Moore	Madeleine Sandefur
	Pam Cornett	Julie Groepper	Barbara Peet	Charles Schmidt
Class of 2005	Ruth Hoyt	Gregg Groepper	Greg Storms	Janet Schofield
Joyce Hamilton	Stan Sterba	Barbara Lindley	Norma Trevino	
David Junkin	John Thaxter	Anita Westervelt	Sherry Wilson	
Statira Wilmoth				

Class of 2006

Robert Archer
Jolaine Lanehart
Eileen Mattei

Class of 2007

Mary Jean Garcia
Paula Parson
Kamala Platt
Rick Ramke
Janet Shriver
Larry Shriver
Sharon Slagle

Class of 2010

M Lee Brown
Susan Kerens
Heidi Linneman
Patti Pitcock

Class of 2011

Joyce Fowler
Steve Fowler
Sally Robey
Judy Svetanoff

Class of 2014

Pat Bowen
Paul Cardile
Robert Gaitan
Joni Gillis
Cristin Howard
Kristin Klein
Ed Langley
Cecilia Montalvo
Carol Rausch
Peggy Reeves
Rene Rubin
Carolyn Woughter

(Reminder that newly
certified members had to
report 80 volunteer
hours and 16 AT to
certify then recertify in
their first year)

Congratulations to all members for an outstanding 2016!

SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH

M. LEE BROWN

by Heidi Linnemann

M Lee's connection with the land defines her world.

Roots that reach deep into the earth, M. Lee grew up “free range” on her family’s farm and ranch near Belmont, a tiny community about 60 miles east of San Antonio, Texas. She developed a deep love of nature, with days spent exploring fields and creeks, riding Little Joe and fishing in the Guadalupe River.

M. Lee trained as a school psychologist, earning her master’s degree from Texas State. She put her talents to use working in indigenous community schools in both Alaska and Appalachia, living, as she puts it, “out of my backpack”. Through her work she developed a strong respect for people who lived with the land and an awareness of the negative effects of rapid cultural and environmental changes on societies.

M. Lee and her spouse returned to the ranch in 1995 to start a certified organic herb and native plant nursery and manage the ranch for her family. She remained there until her

family decided to sell the ranch in 2006. M. Lee and her spouse then moved to Dripping Springs, TX.

Moving from the Post Oak Savannah region to the Edwards Plateau of Hays County, she felt the need to learn more about the land, and enrolled in the TMN class offered by Hays County, graduating in 2010. M. Lee spent many days exploring a little known 64 acre tract donated to Dripping Springs for use as a passive use park. Named Charro Ranch Park, the park was left dormant for lack of City funding. To ensure the park was developed for passive use and to encourage others in the community to explore the park, she gained approval from the Hays County Chapter for a project to partner with the City of Dripping Springs. The project took off and was highlighted as part of the Texas Master Naturalist Program's 2014 Texas Community Excellence Award. (see www.txmn.org/awards TCEQ Award 2014 for video of this project.)

Working on this project developed her skills in working with volunteers (both Master Naturalists and the public). She worked with the city officials and served on the Charro Ranch Park Committee to develop and implement a master plan.

M. Lee organized teams of Master Naturalists to conduct flora and fauna surveys, monthly workdays, and worked with youth groups to get the community involved. She wrote grants to build a bird blind.

In 2015, she moved to Laguna Vista, and once again felt the need to learn more about this new environment. The best place to learn? The RGVCTMN training class, of course! Graduating last April, she immersed herself in our Chapter's mission, and accepted nomination as our Chapter President for 2017.

Focused on helping the Chapter grow, she is working on a program to develop better communication with our partners through project ambassadors; establish a speaker's bureau; offer workshops to members to become more comfortable as speakers. She has obtained a larger meeting room for our chapter meetings, formed a committee to offer more field trips for our members, and works hard at improving communication with all of the members. She continues to be impressed with the enthusiasm for volunteering and the depth of knowledge reflected in our membership.

Soft spoken, with a dry sense of humor, M Lee Brown is a member who makes us proud!

Palo Verde or Retama?

By Anita Westervelt

Remember those ghastly ‘compare and contrast’ college test questions? That concept always seemed redundant -- until I began looking closely at the flowers of two of our beautifully-flowering spring trees: **Palo verde**, *Parkinsonia texana*, and **retama**, *Parkinsonia aculeate*.

These two trees are blooming across the path from one another on Ebony Loop in Harlingen’s Hugh Ramsey Nature Park. The flowers are said to be identical and when in full bloom, the trees exhibit a sea of yellow dotted with orange. Close inspection shows that the flowers are indeed different. VOILA!



Retama Flowers and Leaflets



Palo verde Flowers and Leaves

Compare and Contrast Flowers

Flower shape and size are very close. Both have flowers with five yellow petals. On retama, one of those petals may be orange, have an orange blush or patterned with orange dots. Palo verde petals are frillier edged and some petals may have a hint of orange at the base of a petal. The anther (top of the stamen) of palo verde flowers are larger and more vibrant orange than those of the retama flower.

Similarities:

- Same family -- Fabaceae (Leguminosae: Caesalpinoideae)
- Green bark, brown on older trunks
- Sheds leaves in winter

Differences:

- Palo verde, moderate growth, more drought-tolerant; retama, fast-growing, likes wooded areas near rivers and resacas.

- Palo verde blooms spring and summer; retama, spring, summer and fall.
- Palo verde has insignificant spines; retama, vicious thorns.
- Palo verde is denser growth pattern with zigzag branches; retama, airy, graceful droop.

The big tell: The leaves. Palo verde has small round, compact, leaflets. Retama leaves are alternate, tiny and widely spaced on broad, flattened, 12-inch-long rachis

Coastal Cleanup

by Chris Freeman

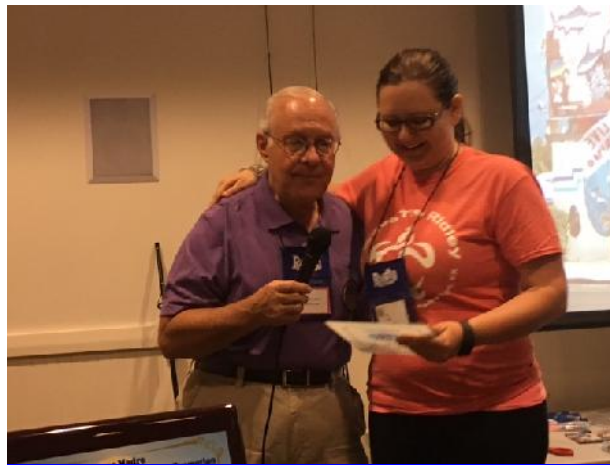
A few members from our Master Naturalist class recently met at the swinging bridge near Long Island Village in Port Isabel to clean up the shoreline. This is the area that my husband and I help patrol whenever we have cold weather to find stranded cold stunned turtles. We noticed how littered the area was on our last rescue mission and decided that this is an area that is overlooked by coastal clean ups. Kat Lillie, Peggy Walker, Dan Freeman, myself and a couple of Village residents helped pick up 20 bags of litter. I have had several residents in the village thank us and they have expressed their desire to participate with us in the next clean up.



SEA TURTLE INC. WINS AWARD AT WOVE 2017

by Carolyn Cardile

Congratulations to Sea Turtle, Inc., recipients of the Outdoor and Wildlife Preservation Award at WOVE. St. Andrew's Church has been recognizing individuals for their contributions to the preservation of our local environment and its wildlife for several years. Although WOVE is now run by the SPI Birding and Nature Center, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church continues to sponsor this award. This year Sea Turtle Inc.'s public education program and its efforts to protect sea turtles made the entire organization the obvious choice for this award. Congratulations to everyone who works or volunteers at Sea Turtle, Inc.



Paul Cardile, a member of the WOVE steering committee and St. Andrew's Church presented the award to Kat Lillie, representing Sea Turtle, Inc.



Kat displayed the award at the Sea Turtle, Inc. exhibit table during WOVE

Save the Date!



- ✓ **All** members are eligible to attend the Annual Meeting! It's a great way to earn AT (maybe even earn some volunteer hours) and meet TMN's from every corner of Texas.
- ✓ Agenda will be posted in June, and registration will start late July/early August.
- ✓ Here are some ways you can participate:
 - Present a session (1-4 hours with a topic or theme that can transfer to other areas of the state).
Proposals due June 1 (link to form: <http://www.regonline.com/TXMN2017CallforProposals>)
 - Develop a chapter project display or chapter video(monetary award to winning chapters)
 - Volunteer to help our chapter with the Silent Auction (we need a chairperson and workers). Our chapter will receive 20% of the funds raised by the auction (last year, the chapter took home \$2000).
 - Recommend programs/presenters (submit contact information to Jolaine at ljlanehart@gmail.com).
- ✓ Check out previous Annual Meetings at: <http://www.txmn.org/past-annual-meetings>
- ✓ Watch for more information from your TMN State Representative, Jolaine.

Controlling Your Inbox Clutter

You Asked, We Heard You


by Jolaine Lanehart



Ok, this might not fix ALL of the email clutter, but it should help with some of it, particularly that from other TMN Chapters. Simply go to the txmn.org website.

Select the Tab "Staying Connected" then select "Texas Master Naturalist Listserv". Please see next page.

Once you have set up a password, you can log in and unsubscribe from the listserv or change your preferences and receive a digest. *This will **not** change your rgvctmn.org listserv emails.* You may still receive some emails from the State that may be forwarded by another RGVCTMN member.



Texas Master Naturalist

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Texas Master Naturalist

What is, and how do I sign up for, the Texas Master Naturalist Listserv?

The Texas Master Naturalist Listserv is a communications media hosted by Texas A&M for the Texas Master Naturalist at no charge to Master Naturalists. The purpose of the Texas Master Naturalist Listserv is to provide a means of quickly distributing news, announcements, notification of events, grant opportunities and other items pertinent to Texas Master Naturalists. To sign up for this free service (you may unsubscribe at any time), please follow the instructions below:

To join the Texas Master Naturalist LISTSERV mailing list:

1. Complete the [Texas Master Naturalist Listserv Sign-up submission form](#) (there is no fee for the Listserv and you may unsubscribe at any time)
2. click the SUBMIT button on the form
3. within a few minutes you should receive a confirmation request from the Listserv. You **MUST** reply to this confirmation or you will **NOT** be added to the Listserv.
4. again, within a few minutes you should receive a message similar to the following:
"Your subscription to the Texas Master Naturalist list has been accepted."

That's all there is to joining! You should receive announcements automatically via the email from which you signed up. If your email address changes, you will need to register again.

Less Traveled Trails: The Longoria Unit

by Renee Rubin

Photos by Michael Delesantro

On an early spring day, a flock of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers flit in the branches of the blooming Colima along the trail of the Longoria Unit. As the season progresses, migrating warblers, vireos, and other birds will use the native vegetation and water dripper as they make their way north.



Entrance



Green Jay

The raucous call of Chachalacas, clicking of Green Jay bills, and bouncy songs of Olive Sparrows remind visitors that the Longoria Unit is also home to many valley specialty birds year-round. Information about some of these birds and about other aspects of the natural history of the site is available along the trail. On a side trail, an Eastern Screech Owl peeks out of a nest box and Black and Turkey Vultures slowly rise from their roost.

Birds are not the only animals that enjoy this oasis of native vegetation amidst cultivated farmland. Mistflower and Desert Lantana along the trails attract a variety of insects and butterflies, including Texan Crescents, Mexican Bluewings, Julia and Zebra Heliconians, and Queens. Tracks attest to the presence of bobcat, javelina, and raccoons.

With less than five percent of original native habitat left in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, the Longoria Unit is an important example of what can be accomplished through revegetation. In

the 1960s, this Texas Parks and Wildlife Department track became the first site in this area where agricultural fields were replanted with native vegetation. Today, there are Ebony, Colima, Granjeno, Hackberry, Ash, and Mesquite as well as native flowering plants growing in an area that once was a cotton field.



Colima (*Zanthoxylum fagara*)

Although the public portion of the Longoria Unit is small, this quiet, out-of-the-way site has a half-mile paved loop, interpretive trail as well as (one-way) dirt side trails that lead to a bird blind and dripper, bird nesting boxes, and some open habitat. This unit is one of several in the Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area and is open to the public except during javelina hunting season in January. The nature preserve doesn't have restrooms or drinking water. The Longoria Unit is approximately 4 miles north of Santa Rosa and 3 miles south of Sebastian.

Directions: From Interstate 2, take exit 169. Head north on FM 506 to Santa Rosa. Continue north through Santa Rosa. The entrance to the Longoria Unit is about 4.7 miles north of Santa Rosa High School on FM 506. The parking area is on the right, approximately one-tenth of a mile past the Longoria Unit sign with the arrow. The correct entrance to the preserve will have a parking lot and a decorative metal arch over the beginning of the trail. Other entrances to the unit are not open to the public and may have locked gates.

We're Proud of You

Milestones Reached this Quarter
January – March 2017

100 Hours of Volunteer Service

Angelica Jackson
Kimi Jackson
Paul Severson
Marsha Ralston Wood

250 Hours of Volunteer Service

Patricia Daigle
Capt. Bill Little
Greg Groepper
Linda Poovey
Peggy Reeves

500 Hours of Volunteer Service

Kristen Kline
Marilyn Lorenz
Joe Lee Rubio
Janet Schriver

1000 Hours of Volunteer Service

Mary Bennett
M. Lee Brown
Robert Severson

5000 Hours of Volunteer Service Frank

THREE SPECIAL THINGS THAT HAPPENED AT WOVE

By Carolyn Cardile

Three unexpected things happened during WOVE that I want to share with members of our chapter. On Thursday Carol Goolsby brought a chrysalis attached to a plant as part of her presentation, “How to Design A Native Monarch Garden”. To everyone’s delight, a monarch butterfly hatched during her program. The photos below show the butterfly on its pot and Carol taking a picture of it with her phone.



The second surprise happened on the same day. That morning we learned that one of our speakers was too ill to do both her morning and afternoon presentations, “Using Native Plants in Your Landscape.” Suddenly, there were 2 time slots on our schedule with no program. I was very gratified by the response of several TMN members and presenters. They worked together to solve this problem so well that I doubt any visitor realized what was happening. Mike Heep and John Yochum both offered to work with M.Lee Brown and Janet Schofield to fill both open time slots. Mike filled the morning opening by giving an extra presentation with Janet assisting. Meanwhile, M.Lee created a new power point and hands-on program using native plants and photos that Javier Gonzalez had prepared for the plant sale signs. Several volunteers moved the plants upstairs for the presentation. Janet did an excellent presentation that afternoon. What teamwork!



Finally, on Friday Jonathan Wood introduced us to two very young Great Horned Owls. They were adorable! Jonathan is a bird rehabilitator, and these little ones needed a lot of attention. I noticed that many visitors were as fascinated as I was. I loved being that close to them.



The unexpected baby owls, the emergence of a monarch during a presentation about monarchs, and the outstanding team work to give our visitors a class about using native plants in their landscape made this WOVE a very special week for me.

TAKE A WALK ON THE BOARDWALK

by Marilyn Lorenz
Photos by Chuck Lorenz

If you pass GO you won't receive \$200 but you will receive a priceless treasure of experience. If you have never strolled the boardwalk of the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center you are missing a great birding experience. If you have never guided a group on the boardwalk you are missing a great life experience.

If you have been on any similar guided trips it can be somewhat intimidating to think of leading one yourself. I had to be tricked into it. I had been giving presentations of birding in the Valley, using my husband Chuck's pictures, and had gradually become comfortable with talking in front of people and answering questions. At WOVE last year Carolyn Cardile said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, "After you tell them about the birds on the boardwalk, why don't you take them outside and show them the real thing?" Clearly I wasn't thinking and replied, "Sure, why not?" And it was easy. Out the door I went followed by about thirty people and I started showing them our birds. They asked questions all the way and I responded easily, I knew these birds. We were out there for about two hours and we all had a great time.

In all honesty I was surprised at how much I had learned about the habitat, climate, environment, wildlife, and behavior of the birds. The TMN training, all those AT hours, and my natural curiosity had painlessly filled my brain with knowledge I did not realize I possessed.

The first time is the hardest, once you know you can do it you can breeze along and tailor the specifics to the season and anything special that comes along. The casual mixed groups of adults and kids that you can get on any given day are always interesting but there is a pressure to show them the special features of nature that live here. You really want to make sure that they get their money's worth. The best trips are with school groups. There is nothing like a busload of eager kids full of the most unlikely questions. They really want to know everything and have new queries before you have answered the last. If hawks eat other birds are they cannibals? Why are the boy ducks so interested in the lady ducks? And, my personal favorite, after noting the paving stones with names of major donors to the facility, several kids wanted to know if there were people buried under there. Fortunately, I was able to reassure them that there are no bodies buried at the Birding Center. For real satisfaction there is nothing better than a group of middle-school kids and if I can manage to show them an alligator their day will be memorable as well.

At this point I have to be careful to not overwhelm people with more than they want to know about estuaries and shorebirds. Keeping it interesting but not knocking them over the head with details requires restraint and a bit of practice but in a very short time you can be welcoming and relaxed with all the many interesting people who come to the island. After all, they come because they are interested in what we have here and we love to share it with them. If you would like to join us as a guide or at the information desk, contact the birding center at *naturalist@spibirding.com* and they will tell you how to get started.



Skimmer Working



Least Bittern



Snowy Egret



"There ARE more birds out there"



Marilyn (lady with camera) with a group of students