



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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FRANK WISEMAN DEDICATES PARK BENCH IN MEMORY OF FELLOW NATURALIST AND FRIEND RICHARD ROESLER

Anita Westervelt



Texas Master Naturalist Thursday Moring Ebony Loop Volunteers Lizz Romero, Anita Westervelt, Vivian Acott, Frank Wiseman, and Janis Silveri (second from right) helped Frank dedicate a bench in honor of deceased Texas Master Naturalist Richard Roesler. Mrs. Sharon Roesler (next to Frank), and Sharon and Richard's daughter, Janette, (far right) joined the group for the dedication.

The bench was placed in the newest Ebony Loop specialty garden by park personnel. The garden, coined the Citrus Garden, was designed by Frank and volunteers. It showcases five native trees in the Rutaceae Family that volunteers planted earlier this year: barreta, colima, Texas torchwood, Sierra Madre torchwood and esenbeckia. Citrus trees also are in the Rutaceae Family. The five newly-planted trees are larval plants to giant swallowtail butterfly caterpillars, as are citrus trees.

Frank is one of the founding members of the Rio Grande Valley Texas Master Naturalist chapter, and was instrumental in starting the first Texas Master Naturalist chapter in the Valley in 2002.

Frank, Richard Roesler, his wife, Sharon, and a handful of other volunteers began working to re-vegetate Hugh Ramsey Nature Park with as many Rio Grande Valley native plants as possible as a volunteer project while they worked on establishing the chapter.

During Richard's membership in the chapter, he logged 1,655 volunteer hours, most of which were spent helping to naturalize Ramsey Park. The project took more than eight years to achieve the group's goal of establishing the park as a true nature preserve with only Valley native plants.

In the early years, they were a group of volunteers, mostly retired professionals, who didn't know each other, according to Frank. "We came together to volunteer at Ramsey Park. We worked together, we ate together, we became friends. Richard was a loyal, hard-working volunteer in Ramsey for almost 15 years. I've wanted to dedicate a bench, with his name on it, but waited for an appropriate site. Our newest garden works out just fine."

Sharon Roesler and Frank selected a spot under the shade of a mesquite tree branch and where the bench faces an angle so visitors can sit and look into the garden, view the path and the forest beyond.

The Thursday Morning Ebony Loop Volunteers work year round and are often joined by local residents. The volunteers meet in the park's parking lot at 9 a.m. each Thursday. They maintain Ebony Loop trail and specialty gardens on the park's south side, learn plant identification, establish new gardens and continue to repopulate the park with native plants.



Richard (Dick) Roesler

DO YOU iNAT? -- OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Anita Westervelt

Twenty Texas Master Naturalists from both the Rio Grande Valley chapter and South Texas Border chapter were awarded certificates recently for their significant participation in the annual iNaturalist City Nature Challenge.

After the awards ceremony and program presentations, members from both chapters supported the idea of promoting iNaturalist to a broader audience, specifically, the residents of the Rio Grande Valley.

Preliminary ideas and plans have been enthusiastically blessed by our sponsors, Javier de Leon and Tony Reisinger, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Park Ranger Tony Henehan -- all who are strong advocates for our chapters embracing this most important citizen science project.

The Volunteer Opportunity: Both chapters take on booth opportunities with many of our partners. This offers an ideal time to talk about the iNaturalist app and website and offer demonstrations to the general public. Generally when we tend a booth, we talk about the master naturalist program. Adding information about iNaturalist can show the public how to get involved with local nature themselves.

iNaturalist: As stated on their website, iNaturalist is a citizen science project and online social network of naturalists, citizen scientists, and biologists built on the concept of mapping and sharing observations of biodiversity across the globe. The more people in the Valley who upload species data, the more Valley habitat knowledge that will be available for laymen and scientists alike to recognize, document, study and protect.

Many species of greatest conservation need are recognized through the iNaturalist data base, which covers the whole gamut of nature -- worldwide -- from spiders to birds to mammals, reptiles, insects, marine life and every plant and creature on earth -- whatever is living, or was once living, including roadkill and skeletons.

How iNaturalist can benefit you: It's a great learning tool. It can show you in an instant if a bug or plant in your garden is a keeper or something you might not want around.

I used to spend hours paging through several bug, plant and bird books when I was writing articles or blog posts.

As much fun as that was, I now have an app on my phone that saves me a tremendous amount of time -- the iNaturalist app -- it's free to download and use.

I also use the website at home, <https://www.inaturalist.org>, where I can upload, compare from the vast data base, and identify observations in larger detail on my computer. In the field, the phone app is convenient and usable. I use my phone's photo editing option before uploading to the iNaturalist app.

You can do it two ways, open the app and take a photo of your subject, complete a couple of easy steps, or take a photo, edit with the camera's photo program and then open iNaturalist and upload the photo. I prefer the second option because I may want a photo for a future news story or blog post. Either way, within seconds, an identification has popped up.

Here are some examples:



Good or bad bug? I'd sometimes see a weird bug in our house. It didn't seem aggressive. If I got close to take a photo, it would launch off whatever surface it was on and then drift, rather than fly. I found a dead one, uploaded a photo to <https://www.inaturalist.org> and instantly had identification: Cockroach Egg Parasitoid Wasp.

And what a good bug it is! Sometimes called ensign wasps, they do not sting or bite humans, but they're no friend to the American cockroach. "The females lay a single egg in the egg cases of the American cockroach. Although their typical habitat is outdoors, where most cockroaches deposit and conceal their egg cases (called oothecae (plural form)), the wasp also can be found indoors where it will search out cockroach egg cases." -- Source, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu



What's eating my kale? Sure it was way past kale-growing season, but the plants were still pushing out small leaves that I could use in my breakfast drink. I photographed the caterpillars, uploaded to iNaturalist -- the results: **Great Southern White butterfly caterpillars**. I let them

eat; more kale leaves will be forthcoming, and this week white butterflies are frolicking all over the yard!



A big turtle was lumbering across our yard. I uploaded a photo and discovered its name, Common Slider, which allowed me to research about sliders and write a naturalist article for the McAllen Monitor.



Something's coming up near my vegetable garden and it's not a beet plant. iNaturalist identified it as Desert Bluebells. Something to keep and see if it will bloom.

Although the app and website have been remarkably helpful to me personally, the www.iNaturalist.org website is fascinating in itself to browse through and see photographs of species from all over the world.

Volunteer Opportunities: Anyone interested in attending booth-sitting opportunities to demonstrate iNaturalist options, please sign up. The more individuals on the lists, the more opportunities will be available throughout the Valley where we can offer these demonstrations. You can choose to volunteer geographically close to where you live, or mix Upper Valley and Lower Valley and meet sister chapter members. You will not be obligated unless the particular

opportunity meets with your personal schedule. If enough people show an interest, individual obligations would not take up much of anyone's personal time throughout the year.

Booth-sitting is a fun and quick way to earn volunteer hours, attend interesting events, meet the public and take pride in offering valuable native information to the public.

Personal time photographing and uploading species information onto iNaturalist is a citizen science project that earns volunteer hours, too.

Training sessions about using iNaturalist, both the app and the website, will be arranged as needed. If you want to learn how to use this citizen science program to booth sit or to use for your own benefit, and/or you want to be a member of the booth-sitting team please contact one of the committee members:

- South Texas Border Chapter, 2nd Vice President, Elizabeth Perdomo, at mateliza@aol.com
- Rio Grande Valley Chapter, Anita Westervelt at jjvanm@gmail.com

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER ARE AS ANCIENT AS THE CICADA'S SONG

Anita Westervelt



Newly –Emerged Superb Dog-Days Cicada

A Texas cicada, the Superb Dog-days cicada, *Neotibicen superbus*, is so named because it makes its annual appearance during the dog days of summer -- those most hot and humid, sultry August days.

Historically, the dog days followed the heliacal rising of the star system Sirius (Sirius marks the astrological nose of Canis Major, the Greater Dog) which Greek and Roman astrology connected with heat, drought, sudden thunderstorms, lethargy, fever, mad dogs, and bad luck, according to the Internet's Wikipedia.

Airless August nights are filled with high-pitched noises like whining buzz saws, a clamor that can be annoying and comforting all at the same time.

A "rapid clacky-clicking crescendo and fall" describes the song of the Superb Dog-day cicada, according to this website: <http://www.insectsingers.com/> -- where cicada songs from other parts of the world can be heard, like Borneo, New Zealand, India and points beyond.

Superb Dog-day cicadas are found in much of Texas and Oklahoma, and parts of Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, New Mexico and Louisiana.

Periodic cicadas spend most of their lives as underground nymphs, emerging in huge numbers only after 13 or 17 years. Annual cicadas are species that emerge every year. They have lifecycles that can vary from one to nine or more years as underground larvae; their emergence above ground as adults is not synchronized, so some appear every year.

Adult dog-day cicadas are nearly two inches long from nose to wing tip. They live five to six weeks. Two other cicadas found in the Valley are a tiny cicada three-quarters of an inch long, called little mesquite cicada, *Pacarina puella*, and scrub cicada, *Diceroprocta delicate*, that measures one and a quarter inch.



Scrub Cicada

Mesquite Cicada

There are more than 190 varieties of cicadas in North America, and more than 3,390 varieties of cicadas around the world.

For those who like to know collective nouns, a group of cicadas is called a cloud or plague -- although locust cause harm to crops and vegetation, cicadas do not. Adult cicadas do not eat.

Most cicadas sing at night to avoid predators. A group of singing cicadas is called a chorus. Each species has a different song. Some calls can be heard up to a mile away, according to "National Geographic."

The buzzing sound cicadas make is a mating call. Male cicadas vibrate a white, drum like membrane on their abdomens called a tymbal. After mating, female cicadas lay their eggs in slits that they cut in tree branches. The eggs hatch in about six to 10 weeks, the larvae drop to the ground and burrow underground where they suck liquid from plant roots.

A cicada exoskeleton is more prevalent than the cicada itself. On the rare occasion an adult is found drying in the early morning, if picked up, it will make a frenetic buzzing whereby eliciting a quick release from the offending hand. The cicada will make a couple of jump-starts and then wing its way into the morning sky. Cicadas do not sting or bite.

The Internet is full of fascinating sites about cicadas, including Sky and Telescope, Cicada Mania, Dave’s Garden, Bugguide, Live Science and (Texas Insects) tamu.edu.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY CERTIFIED MEMBERS

Karen Ceballos



Karen started as a Visitor Services and Community Engagement intern at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in December 2018 and attended the spring 2019 class. She used to work for the New York Master Naturalist program, so she has been delighted to continue being a Master Naturalist in Texas and has been so grateful for the TMN community. She has been volunteering as the Webmaster for the Rio Grande Chapter of TMN, and has helped with field programs/teacher trainings with Elisa Velador, Mark Conway’s bird banding, and naturalist events around the

Valley. Karen is originally from San Diego, CA, but earned a degree in Environmental Sciences and Sustainability in upstate New York. She enjoys backpacking, rock-climbing, kayaking, and making art! She has thoroughly enjoyed her time in the valley – she’s been blown away by the wildlife! – and loves sharing this place with visitors to the Refuge. Karen is also extremely thankful for all the work and help that fellow TMNers have given to programs and projects at Laguna Atascosa.

Robin Gelston

Robin and her husband Hector are Harlingen residents and have four children and three grand-children. Always interested in our environment, Robin holds a Master of Science degree in Environmental Science from the University of Texas/Dallas. Working for Texas Department of Transportation for the past 10 years, she is supervisor of their environmental section. Elected by her class, she serves on our board of directors as their representative. She drives an ATV for turtle patrol and assists the bird banding efforts of Mark Conroy. She also helps Joni with the new class committee.



Rebecca Guerra



Rebecca is a Cub & Boy Scout Master, and works with Willacy County as a Deputy County Clerk. In addition, she has been a real estate agent since 2006. A native of Willacy County, she loves the outdoors as do her kiddos. She told me that they are always rescuing all types of animals and love to preserve our native habitat. Just recently they rescued various types of birds that fell out of their nests during the storm. Rebecca volunteers at the Willacy County Resource Center and with the East Foundation's programs. She states that the only thing that she dislike about the chapter that it's so very far away from me – a 45 minute drive to San Benito!



Paul Hecht

A retired geological engineer who thought there was little geology in the Valley, Paul has since learned much of interest, including the volcanic ash deposit up the valley. He has always loved the outdoors and continues to learn much about the local fawn and fauna. Paul has enjoyed meeting the many interesting people through TMN and loves the wonderful activities offered.

Rosemarie Norman

Native to Harlingen, Rosemarie is a retired librarian who, with her husband Eben, has one daughter, Lisa Human, and a new granddaughter, Harper. Learning about RGVCTMN from Patti Scott and Karren Scheiner, Rosemarie and four buddies attended the January 2019 class together! Rosemarie spends most of her volunteer time with Washed Up Texas and the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. She and her husband have an RV which they take to South Padre Island for a



couple of months, and then spend July through November traveling throughout our country. Rosemarie enjoys meeting new people and is developing her skills as a birder through those she has met through our chapter and ACAS. She said “The Texas Master Naturalist program has given me the new purpose of being a better steward of God’s creations and His gifts to us”.

Michael Rodriguez



A Biology major at TSTC-Harlingen and father of two, Michael is a beginning birder, photographer, avid cyclist and bicycle mechanic. He first discovered the Texas Master Naturalist program while attending 2017’s Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival. Michael felt immediately that TMN would be an excellent opportunity for him to network with other like-minded individuals and provide a glimpse into what post-graduation employment opportunities are out there. He has worked as a retail manager for the past 10 years and had grown increasingly unfulfilled with what he’s been doing. As his own children got older and more curious about the world around them, Michael began to reflect on his own wonderment at their

age. He made the decision to return to school to pursue a degree in Biology in 2017, without a clear career path but TMN is proving to be invaluable in making life-long connections and being afforded the opportunity to get hands on training and experience in conservation, preservation and interpretation. He says “I am eternally grateful for the opportunities I have been given by this chapter and the people I’ve met along the way”.

MILESTONE AWARDS – 2nd QUARTER 2019

Dana Allamon - 100 hours



Dana attended the fall class in 2018 for the RGV Chapter of TMN and immediately jumped into participating with chapter activities. Volunteering at Sea Turtle Inc. in various capacities she is serving her second year as a Nesting Sea Turtle ATV Patroller. She recently became a deckhand for UTRGV's Ridley Research Vessel and will help out with school and camp groups.

- Thadea Corkgill - 1000 hours**
- Amanda DeLeon - 100 hours**
- Teresa DuBois - 250 hours**



Rita Galloway - 1000 hours

Rita grew up on a farm in Jacksonville, Illinois and has been a life-long teacher, teaching everything from Pre-Kindergarten to College Students (sometimes teaching parents of my Kinder students in college or teaching my Kinder students again in college classes) Still involved in education, Rita does in-service for teachers and classroom presentations for children. A member of Grace Lutheran, Rita is involved in their group creating prayer shawls. She and her husband Jimmy volunteer at Sea Turtle, Inc. and Washed Up Texas. Their home yard is a Certified Monarch Sanctuary filled with host plants for all kinds of caterpillars and nectar plants for butterflies. She truly enjoys

teaching about the butterfly life cycle to her students and told us that they still remember setting the butterflies free that they had watched in class. This past winter she and Jimmy were able to go to the mountains of Mexico to see the overwintering Monarchs - awesome! Rita enjoys the shared interests of our chapter, and finds the members friendly and willing to help each other.

Paula Parsons Hecht - 2500 hours



Class of 2007

Retired from university in 2013

Love being part of TMN—always something new to learn and do; meeting wonderful people; have learned to appreciate importance of native plants to support birds and butterflies;

Larry Johnson - 250 hours



Larry is a recent member (class of 2018) known as the moderator of our door prizes. With a gregarious personality and a great sense of humor, his offerings are always truly enjoyable! Larry describes himself as a retired free-lance project manager, having worked all over the country developing projects for various companies. You can find him driving the tram at Resaca de La Palma. Pictured here is a duck he rescued as a chick and each year when it migrates north it returns to Larry's lap to say hello.

Marilyn Lorenz - 1000 hours



I moved to the Valley from Connecticut and soon realized that everything here was different from what I had known. As I came to learn about the Texas Master Naturalist association I thought that this would be the best way to learn about my new habitat, and so it has proved. To me there is no such thing as being outside too much and every moment here I learn wonderful new things about this environment. Although my primary focus concerns all things bird related, I find myself on turtle patrol, maintaining trails, and "stargazing," as well as leading bird walks, giving presentations, and writing nature articles. All the members of TMN are united in our love of nature and recognize the importance of preserving the wild outdoors for the next generation. Our Rio Grande Valley Chapter is the family I found when I came to Texas and I love my family.

Linda Poovey - 500 hours



Linda moved to Texas in 1987 from Kansas. She taught in Port Isabel schools for 30 years mostly with special needs children, and retired in 2010. A member of the TMN class in 2017, she worked at the Birding and Nature center for a few years and loves the outdoors and being in nature. She and her husband love to go camping and enjoy this beautiful planet.

Jacquelyn Pena - 100 hours



Jackie was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee but spent most of her years in Corpus Christi, graduating from Trinity University in San Antonio with a BA in English with a concentration in Latin with the idea of teaching. She quickly realized she was not cut out for a life in the classroom. Her working career developed while working for the Department of the Army at the Corpus Christi Army Depot where she became a computer specialist – and also where she met her husband Lupe who is a career Civil Service employee. In 1993, Lupe accepted a position with the USDA in Brownsville, Texas. They married, built our home on land outside of San Benito, and Jackie accepted a position with Brownsville ISD in

the Computer Services Department where she was a Computer Programmer and then Coordinator for Programming and Technical Support at the Harlingen ISD.

Newly retired, Jackie finally had the time to attend the chapter’s training class, and has enjoyed every minute since. She says: “I have always loved the outdoors, animals and nature so I am in a dream being able to learn about all these things and participate in the activities and volunteer. I have learned so much and am surprised by some of the things I find interesting. I love the beauty and tranquility of nature after so many years in an office.” Jackie volunteers primarily at Laguna Atascosa, She tells us that she learns something each time she is there and sees amazing birds, snakes, plants, etc. She enjoys volunteering and interacting with the employees and visitors and at the refuge. She loves telling them about the all the refuge has to offer, especially the ocelots. Jackie has also represented the chapter at WOVE, Resaca de la Palma, the Big Sit, and the Plant

Show. She states that she enjoys the chapter meetings and social interaction where she has met many interesting and diverse people and is looking forward to the fall activities.

On a personal note, Jackie and her husband have two sons, Alex and Christian. Alex will have his MBA by August. Christian will start his final year at the University of Texas in Austin and will graduate with a degree in Architecture. In February she and Lupe unexpectedly received two Australian Blue Heelers. They are now five months old and although a real handful they are so much fun, goofy and smart. Together they spend a lot of time outside exploring our property, trying to train them and enjoying the birds. She is a voracious reader and never goes anywhere without something to read.

Maria Reyna-Gomez - 250 hours



Maria's education is in Business Administration. She holds a BA in accounting, and works full time for a large not-for-profit medical center in Brownsville where she has been the Controller for 20 years. Currently, she serves on the Chapter's Board as Treasurer and helps in a myriad of ways on the Education Committee.

A lifelong resident of Brownsville, Texas and the youngest of eleven children in the family (eight boys, three girls), Maria grew up loving the outdoors, her mother, especially, loved to fish. Maria is married to Santiago (Jimmy) Gomez, and shares her home with their faithful German Shorthair Pointer Budweiser. Jimmy respects and admires what the Texas Master Naturalist program is and does for our community. He is often seen volunteering alongside her. Jimmy is her personal nature photographer as he loves to take pictures.

A graduate of the training program in 2018, Maria received her initial certification at graduation. Initially volunteering at Resaca the Las Palmas State Park and Birding Center, she seeks volunteer opportunities scheduled for the weekends, and has volunteered in Field Research Citizen Science Programs such as Bird Counts, Audubon Texas T.E.R.N. monitoring, as well as outreach events such as RGV Birding Festival and W.O.W.E., and most recently in Natural Resource Management events.

Maria reports: "I Recently I showed up at the Seed Collection at Laguna Atascosa that was posted on the RGVCTMN website calendar. By midday, I was exhausted from the heat and walking. But when I got home I could not rest, not from the exhaustion, but because I was still hyped up, so excited to have attended and helped harvest native plant seeds for a reforestation effort. It's amazing what joy I get from volunteering. Being a member of this Chapter and the Texas Master Naturalist program has just been a blast. I love to volunteer, learn and share my newly acquired knowledge with my family and friends.

From the onset, even before I was a Master Naturalist everyone I met at the general membership meetings were so inviting, friendly and encouraging. The presentations at the general meetings were so enlightening. Now, when I am volunteering alongside and learning from other Texas Master Naturalist, I literally feel my heart rejoice. I look forward to every day that I can give my time to this chapter, the master naturalist program, and most of all to my community.”

Karren Scheiner - 250 hours

Patti Scott - 100 hours



Native to the valley, Patti loves yard work and has created a butterfly garden at her home. She is an avid birder, and helps every day at the Rio Grande Birding Festival each year marshaling the troops for their field trips. She helps out at the new class training sessions, W.O.W.E. and has recently become involved in Washed Up Texas. Retired from a job as General Manager at Owens and Minor, she loves racquetball, her daughter and two grandchildren.

Miranda Butler-Valverde - 100 hours



Miranda started a year- long internship at Laguna Atascosa in March 2018. After learning about our organization she decided to join the 2018 fall class. She thought it would be a great way to learn more about Texas wildlife and connect with others who enjoyed nature. She says that she quickly felt like a part of the TMN community. Miranda volunteered bird banding with Mark Conway throughout her year in south Texas and said that it truly was the most spectacular part about living in the lower Rio Grande Valley. She is thankful that she was able to be a part of such a great organization. Miranda moved to Los Alamos, N.M. in April where she is now a wildlife intern at the Valles Caldera National Preserve. She is disappointed that New Mexico does

not have a Master Naturalist program.

The photograph is of an Aplomado falcon hatchling that was banded by The Peregrine Fund at Laguna Atascosa NWR.



Proud Supporter Decals are available for \$5.00.
Contact Heidi Linnemann