

Welcome to Balcones Canyonlands Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists

As a trainee in the class of 2023-2024, you become one of the newest members of our chapter! You will be one of a growing number of Texas Master Naturalists™ (TMNs) from chapters all over the state. The Master Naturalist organization began here in Texas in 1997 and has since expanded to every U. S. state and several other countries. Together, we are doing our part to improve habitat and the environment wherever we are. Please use every opportunity you can to pursue whatever drives your passion for nature!



Top row, L-R: White-lined Sphinx Moth, photo by Mika Geiger; Nine-banded Armadillo and Golden Cheeked Warbler, photos by Martha Stockton. Bottom row, L-R: Large Milkweed Bug on Antelope Horn Milkweed, photo by Andrea Lent; Green Anole, photo by Samantha Banken; Frostweed bursting from cold, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.¹

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¹ The photos in this handbook (with the exception of personal portraits and a few images that are otherwise credited) were taken locally by our chapter members and will give you some idea of the wonderful things you might experience in our precious Hill Country ecosystem.

Requirements for Master Naturalist Certification

Training is the first step in this journey. In addition to initial training, the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) program encourages you to volunteer doing work that interests you and to advance your training in whatever related field you choose. The following are the minimum requirements for initial certification:

- 40 hours of initial training
- 40 hours of volunteer service
- 8 hours of advanced training

To certify as part of the 2023-2024 class, all the above requirements must be completed by Aug. 31, 2024. If 40 hours of volunteer work seems intimidating, over the year it averages to slightly more than 46 minutes per week! (If you need more time to complete requirements, the chapter's board has the authority to approve extensions.)

After you initially certify, you recertify each year that you complete another 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours advanced training. However, you may remain an active member of the chapter even if you don't fully recertify every year.

The journey doesn't stop there. The Texas Master Naturalist program awards a certificate and pin when you initially certify. Each year, the state program designs a unique recertification pin to reward every TMN who recertifies that year. It also provides special pins to recognize outstanding accomplishments such as when a TMN achieves double recertification (earns 80 volunteer hours and 16 advanced training hours in a calendar year) and when a TMN surpasses 250, 500, 1,000 and 2,500 volunteer hours during their years of service. There is a higher level of recognition for those elite members who gain 4000 volunteer hours or more.

About the Training Classes and Field Trips

Our chapter's 2023 fall training session includes **online classes** and **in-person field trips**. Both classes and field trips provide instruction based on the Texas Master Naturalist textbook. Our instructors customize your training to focus on the eastern Hill Country ecosystem. That way, when you volunteer at a local park, preserve or other protected space, you can fully appreciate the significance and impact of your work.

Online instruction begins promptly at 6:30 pm on Thursdays. See the calendar beginning on page [4](#) for exact dates.

- Each class session opens at 6:15 pm. The initial 15 minutes is a good chance to bring up questions you have about your training or volunteer opportunities.
- Our instructors are all experts in their field. Some instructors talk more and some less, but each class session ends no later than 9:15 pm. Every class earns 3 initial training hours toward your certification. (See page [25](#) for the procedure to log your hours.)
- If you miss a class, see page [27](#) for the procedure to make it up.
- You are expected to attend or make up every online class plus three field trips.

Field trips provide training in locations that exemplify that topics' concepts. Field trips are in person on Saturdays. There are six available trips, each with limited capacity. Sign up for *three* (only) of the six field trips. Each field trip begins with a few hours of instruction. After a break for lunch/snacks, you then earn volunteer hours working at the site, converting your training into experience. These work sessions are an excellent way to meet others in the chapter who share your interests.



L-R: Fox Squirrel, photo by Erin Hollis; Wild Turkey male, photo by Colette Pearce; Reakirt's Blue Butterfly, photo by Mary Cameron.

Attendance Policy – Initial Training

Attendance at online classes is automatically logged by the meeting program. Attendance at training field trips is recorded through sign-in sheets. You are expected to attend or make up all online classes plus three of the six field trips.

- Online classes are recorded, so a missed class may be made up by watching the recording. This procedure is detailed on page [27](#).
- Some field trips have recordings to cover that class topic. The make-up procedure for a missed field trip is also detailed on page [27](#).
- Alternatively, any missed class or field trip may be made up by attending a neighboring chapter's corresponding class.

If you *do not* make up a missed class/field trip, it counts as an absence. (Classes/field trips that are made up do not count as absences.) **Only two absences are allowed** before the Chapter's board of directors must be consulted. Any third or fourth absence must be reviewed by the Chapter Board and the Training Committee and might be approved on a case-by-case basis. **A trainee with more than four absences for any reason is not eligible to certify with the current class.**

NOTE: We understand this training session is intensive and demands a lot of your time. If you cannot complete training this year, upon request, you may conclude your training in the fall of 2024 without paying additional training fees. Alternatively, you may apply to continue your training at a different chapter. It is up to the other chapter whether to charge additional training fees. Training fees do not transfer from one chapter to another.



L-R: Juniper Hairstreak, photo by Mary Cameron; Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks, photo by Mika Geiger; American Beautyberry, photo by Christi Hastings; Broad-Banded Copperhead, photo by Robbie Sherfy; Common Snapping Turtle, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.



L-R: Inkcap Mushroom and Common Raccoon, photos by Kristin Hames; White-lined Sphinx Moth, photo by Andrea Lent; Shoreline Wolf Spider, photo by Samantha Banken.

2023-2024 Training Class Monthly Calendars

The following calendars provide a quick overview of the classes, field trips and related events that occur during our chapter’s training session. Click on the links below to view details about entries (which are provided in the next section). Before each class or field trip, read the units in the textbook associated with that topic. The textbook explains each topic within the context of the entire state. Most of our instructors customize their training to our local ecosystem.

NOTE: Field trips have limited capacity. Sign up for your favorite *three* of the six available field trips. Each field trip provides instruction plus an opportunity to volunteer at the site.

<h1>August 2023</h1>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	July 31 Last day to apply for training	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Practice for Online Classes (optional) Webex, 7-8 pm	25	26 Meet & Greet Chapter awards, meet your mentor and receive class materials 4-6 pm
27	28	29	30	31 Intro to Chapter & Training Webex 6:30-9 pm		

September 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5 Chapter Board Meeting 7-9 pm	6	7 Volunteers as teachers; Cit. Science Webex, 6:30-9 pm	8	9
10 VMS Q&A (optional) Webex 7-8	11	12 Chapter Meeting 7-9 pm	13	14 Taxonomy Webex 6:30-9 pm	15	16 Native Plants field trip and volunteer 9:30 am-2 pm
17	18	19	20	21 Eco Regions & Concepts, Urban Eco. Webex, 6:30-9 pm	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Laws, Regs & Ethics Webex 6:30-9 pm	29	30 Archaeology field trip and volunteer 9:30 am – 2 pm

October 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Board Meeting 7-9 pm	3	4	5 Entomology Webex 6:30-9 pm	6	7
8	9 VMS Q&A (optional) Webex 7-8 [Concordia -----	10 Chapter Meeting 7-9 pm -----fall break]	11	12 [Annual	13 TMN	14 Meeting]
15	16	17	18	19 Herpetology Webex, 6:30-9 pm	20	21 Land Mgmt field trip & volunteer 9:30 am-2 pm
22	23	24	25	26 Ornithology Webex, 6:30-9 pm	27	28
29	30	31				

November 2023



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Weather and Climate Webex, 6:30-9 pm	3	4 Geology & Soils field trip & volunteer 9:30 am – 2 pm
5	6 Board Meeting 7-9 pm	7	8	9 Aquatic & Wetland Resources Webex, 6:30-9 pm	10	11
12	13 VMS Q&A 7-8 pm	14 Chapter meeting 7-9 pm	15	16 Forest Ecology & Mgmt Webex, 6:30-9 pm	17	18 Hist. Naturalists field trip & volunteer 9:30 am – 2 pm
19	20 [Concordia	21 University	22 Thanksgiving	23 break	24 week]	25
26	27	28	29	30 Ichthyology Webex, 6:30-9 pm		

December 2023



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Wetland Ecology field trip & volunteer 9:30 am – 2 pm Holiday Party & Chap Mtg 5-8 pm
3	4 Board Meeting 7-9	5	6	7 Mammalogy Webex, 6:30-9 pm	8	9 (alternate date for field trip, if needed)
10	11 VMS Q&A 7-8 pm	12	13	14 (alternate date for online class, if needed)	15	16

2023-2024 Training Class Schedule Details

Below are the details for the events occurring during the Balcones Canyonlands chapter training session.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
Aug 24, 7-8 pm	Online practice session (optional)	Are you unfamiliar with using Webex or with online meetings in general? Practice with us! We hope to make our online classes stress-free for you!
Sat, Aug 26 4-6 p.m.	Chapter Meet & Greet Location: Concordia University 11400 Concordia University Dr., Austin, TX 78726 Rm # TBD	Come meet your mentor and other chapter members. Watch as the chapter presents awards to members who have achieved their certification or other milestones. Pick up your textbook, name tag and some welcoming gifts. <i>If you cannot attend this event, contact your mentor to pick up your class materials before classes begin.</i>
Aug 31, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Introduction to Training and Chapter  <i>Chapter representatives at Annual State Meeting 2022, photo by Julian Yates.</i>	Instruction from chapter officers, members and advisors. (See page 18 for pictures of officers, advisors, etc.) This class introduces you to the Master Naturalist program and specifically to our chapter, which is the only collegiate-associated chapter in Texas. We will brief you on what you can expect from this training session. We will also help you envision the breadth of opportunities there are for learning and volunteering as a member of our chapter. <i>There is literally an opportunity for every interest!</i>
Sept 5, 7-9 pm	Chapter Board Meeting ²	All are welcome to attend. See bctxmn.org calendar for details.
Sept 7, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Volunteers as Teachers and Citizen Science (units 23 and 24 in textbook)  <i>Four types of interpreters, from Walter Bailey's presentation</i>	 Walter Bailey, Regional Interpretive Specialist, TPWD, As Master Naturalists, we become a point of contact between nature and our friends, our neighbors and others in the community. Walt will share some tips and principles of interpretation that will help you inspire the people you meet to acts of nature conservation and stewardship He will also introduce us to the many ways we can contribute to community science, and the impact of our contributions upon current environmental research.
Sept 11, 7-8 pm	VMS Q&A (optional)	Join online to ask any logging and VMS questions you have

² Chapter business is typically conducted during Board Meetings. All chapter members are welcome to attend.





Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
Sept 12 7-9 pm	Chapter Meeting ³	Everyone is encouraged to attend. See bctxmn.org/calendar for details.
Sept 14, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Taxonomy (unit 10 in textbook) Examples: <i>Baccharis neglecta</i> (Roosevelt bush, poverty bush) <i>Commelina erecta</i> (widow's tears, dayflower) <i>Cucurbita foetidissima</i> (buffalo gourd, stinking gourd) <i>Dichondra carolinensis</i> (kidney weed, pony's foot) <i>Monarda citroidora</i> (Lemon beebalm, horsemint) <i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i> (hairy-awn muhly, gulf muhly, pink muhly)	 <p>Dr. Mary Kay Johnston, Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Science and Conservation at Concordia University, Texas.</p> <p>Each plant or animal might have multiple common names but each has only one taxonomic name. Dr. Johnston trains us about the structure and usefulness of taxonomy, especially when identifying plants.</p>
Sept 16, 9:30 am -2pm	TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Native Plants Hike and volunteer (unit 11 in textbook) Location: 11400 Concordia University Dr., Austin, TX 78726	 <p>Dr. Mary Kay Johnston, Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Science and Conservation at Concordia University, Texas.</p> <p>Dr. Johnston will lead us around Concordia campus, using a taxonomic key to identify native grasses, flowers, bushes and trees. The key and other identifying handouts will be provided. The hike follows sidewalks and established trails and has a gentle slope, about 1 mile overall. <i>A recording of this topic is available if necessary.</i></p> <p>Following the hike, earn 2 volunteer hours working on the chapter's pollinator garden at Concordia.</p> <p>DETAILS: When you arrive, tell security that you are joining the Native Plants Hike. Park in the main parking lot. Meet on the deck behind building E.</p> <p>Bring comfortable walking shoes and your own food and drink. For work in the pollinator garden, bring your own gloves and favorite gardening tools. Depending on the weather, remember sunblock and mosquito repellent.</p> <p>Campus buildings contain water bottle refill stations and vending areas. Bathrooms are available in the buildings.</p>




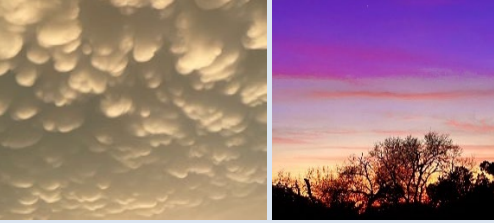
³ Chapter meetings begin with a topical speaker, for which you can earn one advanced training hour. After that, various chapter members update the membership about news and opportunities. For attending a chapter meeting, you can also earn one volunteer hour. See [page 32](#) to learn how to log these hours.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
 <p data-bbox="121 451 1503 535">L-R, Dr. Johnston during plant walk, photo by Shayla Fleshman; Chaparral Dodder (<i>Cuscuta californica</i>), photo by Andrea Lent; Twist Leaf Yucca (<i>Yucca rupicola</i>), photo by Christi Hastings; Saltmarsh caterpillar (<i>Estigmene acrea</i>) on Bluebonnet (<i>Lupinus texensis</i>) seed pods, photo by Samantha Banken; Eastern Speckled Shield Lichen (<i>Punctelia bolliana</i>) and Heller's Marbleseed (<i>Onosmodium helleri</i>), photos by Vicki Wold.</p>		
Sept 21, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Ecological Regions and Concepts, Urban Ecology (units 4, 5, 6 and 15 in textbook)	Jessica Alderson, TPWD Urban Technical Guidance Program Leader. (Speaker might change.) Texas has several ecological regions, each with identifying characteristics. Ms. Alderson will guide us through the defining characteristics of our Balcones Canyonlands ecoregion and the special challenges of its urban ecology.
Sept 28, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Laws, Regulations and Ethics (unit 22 in textbook)	 <p data-bbox="844 808 1510 871">Michael Mitchell, TPWD Assistant Commander Game Warden (retired)</p> <p data-bbox="844 882 1510 1050">Our natural resources are protected, in part, by laws and regulations. In everyday life, ethical concerns arise as well. Mr. Mitchell provides the basics we need to know and poses thought-provoking instances that we might face when representing our ecosystem to the general public.</p>
 <p data-bbox="138 1234 617 1266"><i>Ethics change? Fashionable feathers and furs c. 1930s</i></p>		
Sept 30, 9:30 am–2 pm	TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Gault Archaeology Site and volunteer work (unit 2 in textbook) Location: 3439 FM 2843, Florence, TX, 76527	 <p data-bbox="844 1281 1510 1344">Dr. D. Clark Wernecke, Executive Director of The Gault School of Archaeological Research, retired.</p> <p data-bbox="844 1354 1510 1627">The Gault Archeological Site near Florence, TX, has single-handedly moved human habitation of our area back thousands of years. Dr. Wernecke leads a slow-paced hike, stopping at significant locations to debunk what many of us learned in school and explain how these earliest “Texans” truly arrived, lived and thrived. The hike follows unpaved trails and has a gentle slope, about 1.5 miles overall. A golf cart is available upon request.</p> <p data-bbox="844 1638 1510 1743">Alternative dates are available for \$10 per person (arranged through Williamson and Bell county museums). <i>A recording of this hike is available if necessary.</i></p> <p data-bbox="844 1753 1510 1795">After the hike, earn volunteer hours doing TBD.</p>







Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
 <p data-bbox="300 199 820 304">Gault School of Archaeological Research</p> <p data-bbox="110 310 332 346"><i>logo from gaultschool.org</i></p>		<p data-bbox="844 147 1518 241">DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. Depending on the weather, you might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes.</p> <p data-bbox="844 262 1518 388">There are portable toilets available at the beginning and mid-point of the hike. A Kiosk at mid-point has water and souvenirs available. CASH OR CHECK ONLY. No cell phone service is available during most of the hike.</p>
 <p data-bbox="113 798 1510 861"><i>At the Gault site, from left, Dr. Wernecke demonstrating an atlatl, photo by Rory Hearse; showing pictographs and various points found on site, photos by Christi Hastings; replica of etched rock found on site, photo by Martha Stockton</i></p>		
Oct 2, 7-9 pm	Chapter Board Meeting (see footnote 2)	All are welcome to attend. See bctxmn.org calendar for details.
Oct 5, 6:30-9 pm	<p data-bbox="300 961 641 1060">TRAINING CLASS: Entomology (unit 13 in textbook)</p> 	<p data-bbox="844 961 1510 1060">Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist- IPM with Texas A&M University AgrLife Extension Service and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor</p> <p data-bbox="844 1081 1510 1270">Entomology is the study of insects, but usually expands to cover other arthropods. Insects and other arthropods are a food resource for a variety of other animals, important in ecosystems as decomposers, predators, parasitoids, and pollinators. Ms. Brown makes learning about these amazing animals fun and enlightening!</p>
 <p data-bbox="105 1417 592 1470"><i>Left, Ladybug, photo by Erin Hollis; right, Texas Brown Tarantula, photo by Martha Stockton.</i></p>		
Oct 9-10	Concordia Fall Break	
Oct 9, 7-8 pm	VMS Q&A (optional)	Join online to ask any logging and VMS questions you have
Oct 10, 7-9 pm	Chapter Meeting (see footnote 3)	Everyone is encouraged to attend. See bctxmn.org calendar for details.
Oct 12-15	TMN Annual Meeting, McAllen, TX and online. ⁴ For info, see https://txmn.tamu.edu/2023-annual-meeting	






⁴ The TMN annual meeting includes a full agenda of seminars, round tables, topical speakers, field trips and other events. Each speaker event that you attend can be logged as advanced training hours.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
Oct 19, 6:30-9 pm	ONLINE CLASS: Herpetology (unit 15 in textbook)	 <p>Travis LaDuc, Curator of Herpetology, Biodiversity Collections, and Assistant Professor of Practice, College of Natural Sciences, University of Texas at Austin</p>
		<p>Herpetologists study amphibians and reptiles. Texas has 225-230 species of herps, the most native species in the US. Dr. LaDuc introduces the wide variety of herps in Central Texas, from anoles to alligators and everything in between!</p>
<p><i>Left, Common Spotted Whiptail Lizard, photo by Jannelle Imken; right, American Bullfrog, photo by Martha Stockton.</i></p>		
Oct 21 9:30 am-2 pm	TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Land Management and Restoration Techniques and volunteer work (unit 20 in textbook) Location: JJ&T tract, 15001 Kollmeyer, Lakeway, TX	 <p>Jim O'Donnell, Forest Ecosystem Biologist with the City of Austin's Wildland Conservation Division</p>
		<p>JJ&T is a 1700-acre former ranch near Lakeway that was overgrazed for over 100 years. Now part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, the City and volunteers built earthworks to stabilize eroding sites, captured water on contours high in the landscape to rehydrate dry hillsides, rebuilt the soil "sponge," and increased native plant diversity – all designed within an adaptive management framework to connect and expand forest patches, promote carbon sequestration, increase groundwater infiltration, provide pollinator habitat, and recycle invasive woody material back into the ecosystem. These efforts recently received an award from the EPA with top honors for Low Impact Green Infrastructure Improvement.</p>
<p><i>JJ&T tract, road with storm damage to trees, photo by Vicki Wold.</i></p>		<p>The field trip begins with an orientation talk at their rainwater barn/nursery followed by a hike to teach about restoration techniques being used at project sites. The walk is about a half mile down a dirt road. They can drive people to the sites if needed. After the talks, you can add your own contribution by volunteering to plant more trees and seeds.</p> <p>DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. Depending on the weather, you might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Bathrooms not available. Extra water/snacks and necessary tools will be provided.</p> <p>IN PERSON ONLY. If bad weather threatens, this event will be postponed to Oct 28.</p>

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
 <p data-bbox="521 541 1097 573" style="text-align: center;"><i>JJ&T tract: a typical work day and crew, photos by Sam Voltaggio.</i></p>		
<p data-bbox="107 594 224 659">Oct 26, 6:30-9 pm</p>	<p data-bbox="297 594 511 695">TRAINING CLASS: Ornithology (unit 12 in textbook)</p>  <p data-bbox="110 1031 638 1083"><i>Left, Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, photo by Colette Pearce; right, Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, photo by Kristin Hames.</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="846 594 1511 659">Dr. Tania Homayoun, TPWD State Ornithologist and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor</p> <p data-bbox="846 674 1495 909">Texas is home to more than 600 identified species of birds, more than any other state except California, and 98.5% of long-distance migratory species in North America have been documented in Texas. Why do birds matter? How are these dino descendants able to fly? What defines a “good” habitat? “Bird brain,” research shows, is something to be envied! Dr. Homayoun trains us about all this and more!</p>
<p data-bbox="107 1098 224 1163">Nov 2, 6:30-9 pm</p>	<p data-bbox="297 1098 540 1199">TRAINING CLASS: Weather and Climate (unit 8 in textbook)</p>  <p data-bbox="126 1451 621 1503"><i>Left, mammatus clouds, photo by Jane Neu; right, purple sunset, photo by Mary Cameron.</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="846 1098 1446 1163">Avery Tomasco, Certified Broadcast Meteorologist, CBS Austin News</p> <p data-bbox="846 1178 1503 1377">Texas weather is notoriously changeable, but meteorologists are getting better at predicting it. Mr. Tomasco grew up in our area and conveys how our weather develops, how our climate is changing, how the geography of Central Texas affects our weather, and how technology helps anticipate future weather patterns.</p>

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
<p>Nov 4, 9:30 am-2 pm</p>	<p>TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Geology & Soils and Bio-Blitz (unit 7 in textbook)</p> <p>Location: 92 Skyview Terrace, Leander, and Avery Ranch Cave, 9510 Morgan Creek Dr, Austin, 78717</p>	 <p>Dr. Nico Hauwert, Hydrogeologist and Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) Program Manager at the City of Austin</p> <p>The South San Gabriel riverbed contains multiple dinosaur tracks, and they happen to lie beneath a bluff that reveals the geographic strata of this area. (Note this is on private land and additional liability waivers must be signed.) The hike is considered moderate effort, about 1.2 miles overall, including descent and ascent along a bluff trail.</p> <p>Our second stop, Avery Ranch cave, is owned and operated as a demonstration cave by the Austin Caving Society. There are no cave species threatened by our visit. It is well lit and has all the formations we love to see. The entrance has some stairs and the interior is narrow in one place.</p> <p>After the cave visit, we will conduct a bio-blitz, identifying flora and fauna on the land above the cave. Bring your cameras/cell phones and download the iNaturalist app before attending this field trip.</p> <p>DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. Depending on the weather, you might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Bathrooms not available. Helmets with lamps will be provided for the cave visit.</p> <p><i>A recording of this topic is available if necessary.</i></p>
 <p><i>Geo/Soils Field Trip, L-R: Acrocanthosaurus tracks, photo by Martha Stockton; Dr. Hauwert lecture and Avery Ranch Cave, photos by Michelle Tobias.</i></p>		
<p>Nov 6, 7-9 pm</p>	<p>Chapter Board Meeting (see footnote 2)</p>	<p>All are welcome to attend. See bctxmn.org calendar for details.</p>
<p>Nov 9, 6:30-9 pm</p>	<p>TRAINING CLASS: Water, Aquatic and Wetlands Resources (units 9, 18 and 19 in textbook)</p>	 <p>Lee Ann and Gordon Linam. He is an Aquatic Biologist, TPWD (retired) and she is a Wildlife Biologist, Wildlife Diversity Program, TPWD (retired).</p>
 <p><i>Laguna Gloria view, photo by Ruthann Panipinto.</i></p>		<p>Life = Water! The Linams describe the water cycle and water resources we have in Central Texas and how aquatic systems and wetlands function. They identify threats to those resources and address the ways scientists monitor and manage conservation efforts for water, groundwater and riparian areas.</p>
<p>Nov 13, 7-8 pm</p>	<p>VMS Q&A (optional)</p>	<p>Join online to ask any logging and VMS questions you have</p>

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
Nov 14, 7-9 pm	Chapter Meeting (see footnote 3)	Everyone is encouraged to attend. See bctxmn.org/calendar for details.
Nov 16, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Forest Ecology and Management (unit 17 textbook)	 Karl Flocke, Woodland Ecologist, Texas A&M Forest Service
 <p><i>Leaf galls on Texas Persimmon, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.</i></p>		Texans have tried to responsibly manage their forests for over a century, but today we are met with challenges of development, wildfire, disease, introduced pests and non-native invasives. Mr. Flocke trains us about historical and current forest management practices that must continually adapt to protect our trees.
Nov 18, 9:30 am-2 pm	TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Historic Naturalists and preserve volunteer work (unit 4 in textbook) Location: Snowden tract, 13043 FM 2769, Cedar Park, 78613	 Maria Alvarado, Lipan Apache Medicine Woman (oftheearthhealing.org)
 <p><i>Agarita in bloom, photo by Erin Hollis.</i></p>		Ms. Alvarado will present the healing properties of plants that Native Americans have used for generations and then lead us on a short hike at the Snowden tract of the BCP to identify healing plants. The hike is about 1 mile along unpaved trails with gentle to moderate slopes. After the hike, trainees can volunteer working on native plantings, removing invasives or pond/trail maintenance. DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. Depending on the weather, you might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Bathrooms and kitchen facilities are available. For volunteer work, bring your own gloves and favorite tools. Additional tools will be provided. IN PERSON ONLY. If bad weather threatens, event will be postponed to Dec 9.
Nov 21-25	Concordia University Thanksgiving break (No class this week.)	
Nov 30, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS: Ichthyology (unit 14 in textbook)	 Stephen Curtis, Aquatic Biologist, River Studies Program TPWD
 <p><i>Black Crappie, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.</i></p>		Ichthyology is the study of fishes. What is a fish? Their ancestry, habitat, shape, feeding and reproduction varies so widely, it can be hard to define. Mr. Curtis explains the diversity of what we call fish and describes the species and habitats we commonly see in Central Texas.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
Dec 2 9:30 am-2 pm	TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Wetland Ecology and Management and volunteer work (unit 19 In textbook) Location: 11400 Concordia University Dr., Austin, TX 78726	 <p>Dr. Sam Whitehead, Associate Professor of Environmental Science, Concordia University, and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor</p> <p>The headwaters of Bull Creek are on the Concordia-managed tract of the BCP, just downhill from the campus buildings. Dr. Whitehead leads us on a moderate hike up and down slopes (about 1.5 total miles) to explore the riparian ecosystem there. When at the headwaters, earn 1-2 hours volunteering with ... TBD.</p> <p>DETAILS: When you arrive, tell security that you are joining the Wetlands Hike. Park in parking lot B. Meet at trail head beside building B.</p> <p>Bring comfortable walking shoes and your own food and drink. For volunteer work, bring your own TBD. Depending on the weather, remember sunblock and mosquito repellent.</p> <p>IN PERSON ONLY. If bad weather threatens, event will be postponed to Dec 9.</p>
 <p><i>Trail to Bull Creek headwaters, photo by Sam Whitehead.</i></p>		
 <p><i>Three views of Bull Creek at Concordia, photos by Zach Stark.</i></p>		
Dec 2, 5-8 pm	Holiday Party ⁵ and December chapter meeting/elections	All are encouraged to attend. See bctxmn.org calendar for details.
Dec 7, 6:30-9 pm	TRAINING CLASS 13: Mammalogy (unit 16 in textbook)	 <p>Dr. Pamela Owen, Associate Director of the Texas Memorial Museum</p> <p>Mammals “R” us...humans as well as coyotes, bats, dolphins, armadillos, etc. No other vertebrate species has conquered the land, sky and water. Dr. Owen trains us about what defines a mammal; how to identify mammals through evidence such as tracks, scat, trails, and skulls; and which mammals are all around us in the Hill Country.</p>
 <p><i>Raccoons, photo by Samantha Banken; White-Tailed Deer (melanistic), photo by Deborah Turner Mack.</i></p>		
Dec 9	Alternative date for field trip, if needed.	
Dec 14	Alternative date for class, if needed.	

⁵ The holiday party includes a short chapter meeting, during which we elect officers for the coming year.

Texas Master Naturalist - Code of Ethics

Each member, in striving to meet the mission, goals, and objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, pledges to:

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct.
2. Promote and support the statewide and local Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program.
3. Respect the state sponsors, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, their roles and expectations.
4. Disseminate information to promote understanding of and appreciation for the values of our natural resources.
5. Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance as a TMN volunteer.
6. Promote competence as a TMN volunteer by supporting high standards of education, service, and performance.
7. Encourage the use of sound biological information in education and outreach and in management decisions.
8. Support fair and uniform standards of service and treatment of those engaged in the TMN Program.
9. Know and follow established TMN Program protocols and policies.
10. Abide by the local Chapter Bylaws.
11. Not use the TMN title, logos, and trademarks for personal endeavors and/or profit.
12. Act as trustworthy and ethical stewards of the environment.
13. Never inappropriately disturb or harass wildlife. Never inappropriately remove anything from its natural state or area.

Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Documents

The documents that govern the conduct of the Balcones Canyonlands Chapter of TMN are:

- [Bylaws, Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Program](#)
- [Chapter Operating Handbook, Balcones Canyonlands Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist Program](#)

Both documents are available on our chapter website, bctxmn.org, under the *Resources* tab.



L-R, top, *Fragile Forktail Damselfly*, photo by Mika Geiger; *Texas Nipple Cactus*, photo by Jannelle Imken; *Raccoon skull fragments*, photo by Ashley Gregory; *Screech Owl juvenile*, photo by Deborah Turner Mack. Bottom L-R, *White-tailed Deer fawn*, photo by Deborah Turner Mack; *Six-spotted Fishing Spider*, photo by Rory Hearse; *Fiddlehead Fern*, photo by Erin Hollis; *Diamondback Water Snake* and *land snail (unk. species)*, photos by Samantha Banken.

Texas Master Naturalist – Standards of Conduct

The Texas Master Naturalist program's mission is 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.

Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers shall at all times:

1. Uphold the commitment made to the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program, the local chapter, and the state sponsoring agencies Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.
2. Commit to the training, volunteer service and advanced training requirements of the TMN Program.
3. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the TMN Program. Volunteers shall endeavor to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.
4. Conduct themselves appropriately to context and setting at all times.
5. Be considerate and respect others' points of view.
6. Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training, research, and impacts, and monthly (at a minimum) report these records to your local Chapter
7. Avoid performing service when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the well-being of the TMN Program and its sponsors, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
8. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client and/or volunteer project.
9. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and the TMN Program.
10. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of TMN Program authority, certification, or membership for personal satisfaction. Advocacy, lobbying or promoting political issues while identifying as a TMN volunteer is strictly prohibited.
11. Cooperate fully with professionals and other Master Naturalist volunteers in the best interest of our natural resources.
12. Refrain from advertising or self-promotion of membership status for personal gain (financial or commercial) or in a manner detrimental to the TMN Program and its volunteers.
13. Use of alcohol and controlled substances while performing service as a TMN volunteer is prohibited. Reporting for service while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from volunteer service.
14. Accept responsibility for decisions made and actions taken based on these decisions.



Some members excel at noticing the small stuff. L-R, Eastern Amberwing Dragonfly and Bee Fly on Texas Thistle, photos by Mika Geiger; Texas Blind Snake, photo by Kristin Hames; Flat-headed Snake, photo by Samantha Banken.



Birds are always favorites. L-R, Painted Bunting, Scarlet Tanager and Bald Eagle, photos by Colette Pearce.

Chapter Resources

State Website: TXMN.org **Chapter Website:** bctxmn.org

Facebook: (Members only) [Balcones Canyonlands Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist at CTX](#)

Chapter Slack channel: (Members only) You will receive an invitation to join after you complete the application process.

Chapter Newsletter: Register on bctxmn.org to subscribe to the monthly newsletter. The newsletter is emailed the first week of each month.

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/balconescanyonlands_txmn

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bctxmn/albums>

Chapter Organizational Structure

Advisors

Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife ebrown@ag.tamu.edu

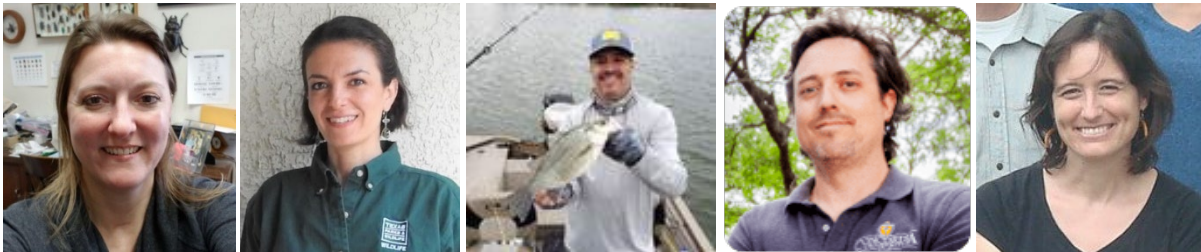
Tania Homayoun, TPWD Tania.Homayoun@tpwd.texas.gov

Jeremy Hull, Travis County BCP Jeremy.hull@traviscountytx.gov

Sam Whitehead, Concordia University sam.whitehead@concordia.edu

Honorary Member

Johanna Arendt, Travis County Climate Change Coordinator Johanna.Arendt@traviscountytx.gov



Advisors, L-R: Wizzie Brown, Dr. Tania Homayoun, Jeremy Hull, Dr. Sam Whitehead. Far right, honorary member Johanna Arendt.

Officers

President: Julian Yates, julian.yates8@gmail.com

Vice-President: Skip Beard, skip.beard@gmail.com

Secretary: Erin Hollis, sillygirl508@gmail.com, and Andrea Lent, a_arcand@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Gene Janulis, genejanulis@yahoo.com

Immediate Past President: Larry Root, larryroot58@gmail.com



Officers, L-R: Julian Yates, Skip Beard, Erin Hollis, Andrea Lent, Gene Janulis, Larry Root.

Directors/Committee Chairs

Advanced Training Director: Barbara Johnson, barbara.l.johnson@gmail.com

Communications & Media: Suzy Meriwether, suzypmeriwether@gmail.com

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility: Stephanie Putnam, stephanie.putnam@gmail.com

Historian/Archivist: TBD

Hospitality Director: Paula Biestek, cmoonbeam61@gmail.com



Directors, L-R: Barbara Johnson, Suzy Meriwether, Stephanie Putnam, Paula Biestek.

Membership awards & certification: Brenda Foss, bjfoss11@gmail.com

New Class Representative: Imran Ghani, ihghani@gmail.com

Outreach Coordinator: Robbie Sherfy rwsherfy@yahoo.com

Training Director: Sheila Endres sendres@gmx.com

Volunteer Opportunities Director: Kimberlee Harvey, kimberlee.c.harvey@gmail.com



Directors, L-R: Brenda Foss, Imran Ghani, Robbie Sherfy, Sheila Endres, Kimberlee Harvey.

Training Committee Questions/Contacts:

Application Process: Lisa Landry lisalandry126@gmail.com, Sheila Endres sendres@gmx.com

Attendance/Absences/Make-up Classes: Mary Cameron, maryfc2@gmail.com, Bev Cusmano, bacusmano@aol.com, Christi Hastings, christihastings@icloud.com

Class/Group Projects: Imran Ghani ihghani@gmail.com, Lee Hamilton leebhamilton@gmail.com, Lisa Hamilton lisamhamilton@protonmail.com

Communications/Website/Slack Liaison: Alex Castillo Alejandra.castillo46@gmail.com

Field Trips: Ariana Afzel ariafzal1984@gmail.com, Jacob Mendenhall blinds.jacob@gmail.com, Sheila Endres sendres@gmx.com

Mentors & Membership Committee Liaison: Bev Cusmano bacusmano@aol.com

VMS: For trainees only - Nancy Gentzel, nancyg1492@gmail.com. For rest of chapter - Sheila Endres, sendres@gmx.com, Brenda Foss, bjfoss11@gmail.com, Paula Biestek c.moonbeam61@gmail.com

Webex: Alex Castillo Alejandra.castillo46@gmail.com, Sheila Endres sendres@gmx.com



Training Committee, Top, L-R: Ari Afzal, Liz Brewer, Mary Cameron, Alex Castillo, Bev Cusmano, Imran Ghani. Bottom L-R: Lee Hamilton, Lisa Hamilton, Christi Hastings, Caitlin Houstoun, Lisa Landry, Jacob Mendenhall. Nancy Gentzel not pictured.

Waters Specialist: Gene Janulis, genejanulis@yahoo.com

Waters Specialist Study Group: Zak Youngquist, zak.youngquist@gmail.com

Photography Interest Group: Mika Geiger, mika@geigers.org, and Gene Janulis, genejanulis@yahoo.com

Chapter Flickr Account: Gene Janulis, genejanulis@yahoo.com



These photos feature some of our chapter's field trips in the past year. L-R: Plant walk at Laguna Gloria, photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Nothing night at Snowden Tract, photo by Judy Osborn; Another nothing night image, photo by Rory Hearse; Fossils, photo by Martha Stockton. Bottom, L-R, Zilker Gardens, photo by Rory Hearse; Fish at Hamilton Pool, photo by Erin Hollis; Westcave Preserve, photo by Martha Stockton.

Volunteering

The Texas Master Naturalist program trains and provides knowledgeable volunteers that help protect and care for the natural resources around us. The requirement of 40 hours of volunteer service during a calendar year might seem daunting, but that amount requires only 46 minutes (roughly) per week. Plus, there is such a variety of opportunities, you can choose to do something you enjoy while giving back to the nature we all love. Some volunteering opportunities are one-time events, such as a lake cleanup or a bird count. Others require longer-term involvement, such as the Pollinator Garden project, Golden Cheek Warbler nest resighting, or fuel moisture monitoring. Additionally, our members volunteer leading hikes, maintaining trails or working the visitor reception desk at places like Westcave Preserve or the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (BCNWR). Your mentor can help you find volunteering efforts you will enjoy!

Please keep the following guidelines in mind whenever you volunteer through our organization:

- TMN is apolitical. Avoid wearing anything that could be deemed political when volunteering.
- Wear your chapter name badge when volunteering.
- No double dipping – a single efforts' hours may be counted only once and for only one organization. NOTE: some TPWD volunteer opportunities keep their hours logged separately (for example, Angler Education, Texas Family Outdoors, etc.). When volunteering with other TPWD organizations, let them know you already have a VMS ID so your hours get credited under our organization.
- You may not count paid work as volunteer hours.
- Work done for (most) private purposes can't be counted.



Members in action, L-R: Creating a pollinator garden at Hamilton Pool, photo by Erin Hollis; Planting at Vireo Preserve, photo by Judy Osborn; Clearing invasives at Snowden, photo by Martha Stockton; Brush management at Parkhouse Tract, photo by Rory Hearse.

Organizations in Our Community that Rely on Our Volunteers

Austin Bat Refuge - <https://austinbatrefuge.org>

Austin Geological Society - <http://www.austingeosoc.org/>

Austin Parks and Recreation Natural Areas and Preserves - John Davis, john.davis2@austintexas.gov

Austin Sierra Club - <https://www.sierraclub.org/texas/austin>

Austin Wildlife Rescue - <https://www.austinwildliferescue.org>

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge - https://www.fws.gov/refuge/balcones_canyonlands

Bat Conservation International- <https://www.batcon.org>

Bull Creek Foundation - <https://bullcreekfoundation.org/index.php/volunteer>

Central Texas Mycological Society - <https://www.centraltexasmycology.org>

City of Austin Watershed Protection Department - <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/watershed-protection>

City of Austin, Wildlands (Balcones Canyonlands Preserve) - <https://austintexas.gov/department/balcones-canyonlands-preserve>

Colorado River Alliance - <https://coloradoriver.org>

Hornsby Bend Center for Environmental Research - <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/center-environmental-research>

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center - <https://www.wildflower.org>

Lower Colorado River Authority - <https://www.lcra.org>

Native Plant Society of Texas - <https://npsot.org/wp>

Nature Conservancy - <https://www.nature.org/en-us>

Paleontological Society of Austin - <https://www.austinpaleo.org>

Texas Native Cats Society <https://texasnativecats.org>

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department - <https://tpwd.texas.gov>

Travis Audubon – Baker Sanctuary - <https://travisaudubon.org/sanctuaries/baker-sanctuary>

Travis Audubon - Chaetura Canyon - <https://travisaudubon.org/sanctuaries/chaetura-canyon>

Travis Audubon - Blair Woods - <https://travisaudubon.org/sanctuaries/blair-woods>

Travis Audubon - Commons Ford - <https://travisaudubon.org/conservation/commons-ford>

Travis County, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve - <https://www.traviscountytx.gov/tnr/nr/bcp>

- The grounds around the Snowden House on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) have been transformed into native plant gardens with over 100 different species by a dedicated group of volunteers. We're looking for help with weeding, watering and planting, as well as other work around the preserve tract, including invasive plant removal and trail maintenance.
 - Volunteers help at Snowden every Wednesday (weather permitting) from 9 am-noon.
Link to Signup.com for **Snowden Wednesday**: <https://signup.com/go/AOXtdfm>
 - Travis County also offers special Snowden workdays specifically for our chapter members from 9 am-noon on the 2nd Sunday and 4th Saturday of each month (weather permitting).
Link to Signup.com to sign up for **BCTXMN Weekend Workdays**: <https://signup.com/go/AKFKpSe>
- Link to Travis County Hikes and Volunteering website: <https://www.traviscountytx.gov/bcp/hiking-vol>. This calendar has events from all the education partners around the BCP, including volunteer opportunities, webinars, etc.
- **Fuel Moisture monitoring**- Samples are collected at four sites twice a month. Pick up sampling supplies from field office and drive to sampling locations. Fill small tins with juniper leaves at these locations and bring them back to be dried in an oven. No experience is required for this sampling. Email Becky Woodward at rebecca.woodward@traviscountytx.gov for more details.

Treefolks - <https://www.treefolks.org>

University of Texas Billie L. Turner Plant Resources Center - <https://biodiversity.utexas.edu/collections/plants>. Dr. George Yatskievych, Curator, 127D Main Building, (512) 471-5904. george.yatskievych@austin.utexas.edu (As an additional perk, volunteers who work here get a Faculty Staff ID, can ride the bus and go to U.T. museums for free.)

Vireo Preserve - https://www.austintexas.gov/water/wildland_vol/index.cfm

Westcave Preserve - <https://westcave.org>

Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve - <https://www.stedwards.edu/academics/centers-institutes/wild-basin-creative-research-center>

Zilker Gardens - <https://zilker gardens.org/volunteer-opportunities>



L-R, Bumblebee on Indian Paintbrush, photo by Martha Stockton; Yarrow, photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Bluebonnets, photo by Gene Janulis; Buttonbush, photo by Christi Hastings.

Community Science Opportunities

Birds:

Bird Counts – <https://houstonaudubon.org/birding/christmas-bird-counts/cbc.html>

eBird – ebird.org

Texbirds List Serve – freelists.org/list/texbirds

Nestwatch – Nestwatch.org

Project FeederWatch – feederwatch.org

Breeding Bird Survey – pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs

Climate Watch - audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch

Data Collections:

Texas Nature Trackers - https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/texas_nature_trackers/projects

iNaturalist inaturalist.org Projects:

Herps of Texas

Terrestrial Mollusks of Texas

Mammals of Texas

Birds of Texas

Bees and Wasps of Texas

Rare Plants of Texas

Texas Freshwater Mussels

Red Crowned Parrot Project

Fishes of Texas

Texas Milkweeds for Monarchs

Texas Whooper Watch

Texas Eagle Nest

Monarchs:

Monarch Larva Monitoring Project – monarchlab.org/mlmp

Project Monarch Health – monarchparasites.org

Monarch Joint Venture – <https://monarchjointventure.org/get-involved/study-monarchs-community-science-opportunities>

Water:

Texas Stream Team - meadowscenter.txstate.edu/Service/TexasStreamTeam/citizenscientists.html

Weather:

Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network – Cocorahs.org



Great Horned Owl in flight, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.



Scissortail Flycatcher, photo by Kristin Hames.



Left, rare Texabama Croton, photo by Deborah Turner Mack. Right, Monarch, photo by Vicki Wold.



L-R Sampling micro invertebrates in the Guadalupe River, photo by Rory Hearse; Field trip to Inks Lake Fish Hatchery, photo by Mika Geiger; Cowbird traps at Inks Lake, photo by Michelle Tobias.

Invasives:

Invaders of Texas Program – Texasinvasives.org/invaders/become.php

Cactus Moth Detection and Monitoring Project - gri.msstate.edu/research/cmdmn/cactoblastis_pf.php



L-R: Invasive species include Musk Thistle and Castor Bean, photos by Deborah Turner Mack, and Zebra Mussels, photo by Kristin Hames.



Top, L-R: Cracked Cap Polypore, photo by Erin Hollis; Texas Ironclad Beetles mating, photo by Mika Geiger; Lark Sparrow, photo by Kristin Hames; male Green Tree Frog, photo by Ruthann Panipinto. Bottom L-R, Broad-banded Copperhead, night photo by Mike Kimmins; Raccoon track, photo by Martha Stockton; Crevice Spiny Lizard, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.

Logging Your Hours – VMS

The Texas Master Naturalist program keeps track of all the classes we take and volunteer work we do through a program called the Volunteer Management System (VMS). When you apply to be a new volunteer through the state website, you initiate your criminal background check and you create a username and password for accessing VMS. Save your access credentials here so you have them for future reference.

Your VMS username: _____

Your VMS password: _____

If you forget your password, click the “Forgot your password?” link. If you forget your VMS username, email Sheila Endres (sendres@gmx.com) for help.

Our volunteer hours directly impact the federal funding for our state program and these entries are audited by federal agencies. Therefore:

- It is important to keep track of your hours and to log them on a routine basis.
- Do not log your hours in advance. Only log hours after the work or class.
- To be approved by the audit, these hours must be entered correctly, and they must be entered and approved within 45 days of the original work.
- VMS administrators cannot retroactively approve any hours outside of that 45-day limit except under truly exceptional circumstances.

Advice: Write down your hours in a consistent place. Log all of your hours every week, or no less than once a month, to ensure your hours can be approved within the 45-day limit.

Once a month, you can login to a VMS Q&A online session to find out more about this program. The schedule for these meetings is included in the Training Monthly Calendars beginning on page 4. If you have more immediate questions, you can post them on the VMS channel in Slack or you can email Sheila Endres, sendres@gmx.com.

Logging Your Hours

From our website (bctxmn.org), select the *Resources* tab and then select *Report Your Service Hours* to access the VMS Portal. From the VMS Portal, select *VMS – Volunteer Login*. Enter your username and password and you will then see your personal dashboard.

The screenshot shows the VMS Dashboard interface. At the top left, it says "Welcome, <Your Name>". Below this are six main navigation cards arranged in a 2x3 grid:

- Find Opportunities**: Look for ways to serve on a one-time or regular basis. (Icon: magnifying glass)
- View My Schedule**: See the shifts where I have signed up. (Icon: calendar)
- Report my Service**: Submit volunteer hours. (Icon: clock)
- View My Log Book**: View my volunteer transaction history. (Icon: document)
- My Placements**: View opportunities I have applied for that have been approved. (Icon: checkmark)
- My Referrals**: View opportunities I have applied for that are pending approval and placement. (Icon: square)

At the bottom of the grid are two smaller links: "Edit My Profile" (with a person icon) and "Log out" (with a door icon). On the right side of the dashboard, there is a "Summary" section and an "Approved Hours" section with fields for "TMN Life:", "TMN Year:", and "AT Year:".

Screen shot of the VMS Dashboard

From this point, you can log your hours under *Report my Service* or view the hours you have already logged under *View My Log Book*. Ignore the other categories because they do not apply to our circumstances.

Report My Service

There are three types of hours you will enter during your time as a Texas Master Naturalist:

1. Initial training – Attendance at a class or field trip offered as part of our chapter’s initial training program.
2. Volunteer hours – Time spent on chapter-approved volunteer service opportunities within the community or on chapter business. *For volunteer hours only*, you may include up to one full hour of round-trip travel time in the hours total.
3. Advanced training hours (AT) – Attendance at a chapter-approved training event or webinar.

Report Service

Volunteers

Please select from the following survey(s):

Select an opportunity to report hours/service

- Select an opportunity to report hours/service
- _Balcones Chapter Administrative Work:TMN Admin Report Hours
- _TMN State Organization Administrative Work:TMN Admin Report Hours
- AT: _Monthly Mtg - Balcones-Canyonlands Chapter:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: Annual TMN State Meeting Sessions:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: Attendance at Basic Training for Refresher:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: Attendance at other TMN chapter meetings for speaker:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: Audubon BCP Misc Training:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: Austin City BCP Misc Training:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: BC NWR Tour Leader Training:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: BCNWR Misc. Trainings:TMN AT Report Hours
- AT: Community Presentations:TMN AT Report Hours

- [Volunteer Dashboard](#)
- [Search Opportunities](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Log out](#)

Screen shot of some opportunities available when you click on “Select an opportunity to report hours/service.” Scroll through the selections to find one that matches the type of training or volunteer work that you are logging.

Initial Training Class/Field Trip Attendance Hours

After you select *_Initial Training* from the drop-down box, you will see a screen similar to the following:

The screenshot shows the 'Report Service' form for 'Initial Training:TMN Initial Training Hours'. The form includes a dropdown menu for 'Please select from the following survey(s):' with the selected option '_Initial Training:TMN Initial Training Hours'. Below this is the 'Opportunity Description' section, which states 'Initial Training for new Members. Please provide the title of the class in the description.' The 'Initial Classroom and Field Trip Hours' section contains fields for 'Date of the class or field trip:' (05/19/2022), 'How many hours was the training:' (a text input field), and 'What did you think of the training:' (a dropdown menu). There is also a 'Describe your training:' text area (255 character limit) and 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons at the bottom.

Screen shot of the Initial Training opportunity

To record attendance at an initial training class or field trip, enter the following information:

1. The date you attended class in the “Date” field.
2. Three hours for the class (6:15-9:15 pm) in the “Hours” field.
3. Your opinions of the class in the drop-down survey.
4. The topic covered in the class session and any comments you have about the class in the “Describe your training” box.

When you are finished, click the **OK** button at the bottom of the form. Every few days one of the chapter’s VMS administrators reviews all the hours that are awaiting approval. If there is any problem with your entry, the admin will email you and provide instructions on how to fix the problem. When there are no errors, they will approve your hours.

To Make-Up Class or Field Trip

If you miss an initial training class or field trip, someone on the training committee will send you a link to the recording. (Not all field trips have related recordings but when there is one, we will send you the link.) To make up the topic, watch the recording, write a one-page summary (convince us that you watched the recording) and email the summary to Mary Cameron (maryfc2@gmail.com) or Beverly Cusmano (bacusmano@aol.com). After the synopsis is approved, go into VMS and log the hours using the instructions in the previous section **except** enter the *date your synopsis was approved*, not the date of the original event. Remember to include the topic and the fact that these are make-up hours in the “Describe your training” box.

Volunteer Hours

From the *Report Service* drop-down box (see page 26), select the appropriate category. For example, if you worked in the visitors’ center at the National Wildlife Refuge, select “Visitor Center Support: Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge.” If you helped maintain a trail at the tract of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve managed by Concordia University, select “Nat Res Mgmt: Concordia-managed BCP.” If you worked with the Herp Survey at the Snowden Tract of the Travis County-managed BCP, select “Field Research: Travis County BCP.” A complete list of our chapter’s VMS opportunities and their descriptions is bookmarked in the VMS channel on Slack.

No matter which category you select, read the Opportunity Description from the resulting screen to confirm that the opportunity you selected is the one you want. Each opportunity’s screen is customized for the type of work done within that opportunity, but at minimum you will enter the following information:

1. Enter the date you worked at that location.
2. Enter the hours you worked (including up to 1 hour of any travel time).
3. In the Description box, enter the type of work you did and the name of the individual or sponsoring organization (if any) who led the effort.

Depending on which opportunity you select, there might be other questions to answer, such as how many miles of new trails were constructed or whether you have impact data to report. **NOTE:** *If the work you are logging was part of a team effort, only one person on the team should respond to these impact questions.*

Chapter Meetings

When you attend a chapter meeting, you can typically log two types of hours:

- You will log one **volunteer** hour for the date of the meeting under “Balcones Chapter Administrative Work” and then:
 - Select the date of the meeting.
 - Select “Chapter Meeting” from that screen’s drop-down menu.
 - Put the month of the chapter meeting in the Description box.
- Chapter meetings typically begin with a speaker who presents **advanced training**. For these meetings *you will also* log one hour under “AT: Monthly Mtg_Balcones Canyonlands Chapter” and then:
 - Select the date of the chapter meeting.
 - Include the speaker’s name and topic in that screen’s Description box.

Work Done for Chapter Business

If you work on something that supports the business of our chapter, log those hours under “Balcones Chapter Administrative Work” and then:

- In that screen’s drop-down, you can choose from several selections, such as “Board/Committee Work” or “Photographer.” Choose whichever selection is appropriate for the work you did.
- Be sure to provide details in the Description box to help the approver understand what you did.

The chapter’s board has approved 1 volunteer hour for each photo used for Chapter promotion (social media or other publications). When logging chapter-approved photography hours, select “Photographer” from the drop-down menu.

The board has approved 2 volunteer hours for 500 words plus 2 photos for anyone contributing a Blog article. The photos do not have to be taken by you. Select “Website and Social Media” from the drop-down menu.

Advanced Training Hours

From the drop-down box, select the appropriate category. For example, if you are training to become a tour guide at Westcave Preserve, select “AT: Westcave Preserve Tour Leader Training.” If you attend a guided field trip at the Snowden tract of the BCP,

select “AT: Field Trips - Travis County BCP.” Be sure to include the instructor’s or guide’s name and the sponsoring organization in the Description box. Note that for advanced training, you do NOT add travel time to your hours.

Webinars

There are two types of online webinars that qualify for logging advanced training hours.

- TMN Tuesday and occasionally other TMN state-sponsored webinars – these webinars will have their own opportunity names that you can select from the initial opportunities drop-down, such as “AT: TMN Tuesdays.” You can log advanced training hours for watching any state-sponsored webinar, whether live or recorded, from the current calendar year. These webinars are typically one hour long.
- Other webinars – Webinars offered by other community partners, such as Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Audubon Society, Texas AgriLife Extension, the Nature Conservancy, etc., must be watched live. Parts of the program may be recorded, but the presenter must participate in the live viewing and be able to answer questions from the audience. Log your hours for these webinars under “AT: Webinars” and include the speaker’s name, topic, and sponsoring organization in the Description box.

Fixing Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes. If a VMS administrator finds a mistake, they will email you. From your VMS Dashboard, select “View My Log Book.” Any hours that have not yet been approved will show up with a selection box beside them.

<input type="checkbox"/>	07 May 2022	Yes, Approved	0	0	Training Classes
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 May 2022	Not Yet Approved	0	0	Board/Committee Work

Excerpt from the Log Book screen. A box beside an entry indicates hours that can still be edited or deleted.

To fix a mistake, select the box beside those hours, then at the bottom of your log book, choose Edit or Delete. If you select Edit Selected Record, it will return you to the original opportunity’s screen where you can correct the date or whatever else needs to be fixed. If the VMS admin says you need to re-enter the hours under a different opportunity name, select Delete Selected Record(s) and create a new entry under the correct opportunity title using the original date and number of hours.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18 May 2022	Not Yet Approved	0		
Total		N/A	0		

Edit Selected Record

Delete Selected Record(s)

Excerpt from the Log Book Screen indicating a selected entry to be edited or deleted.

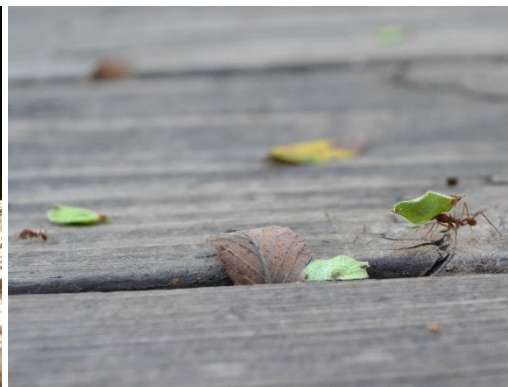
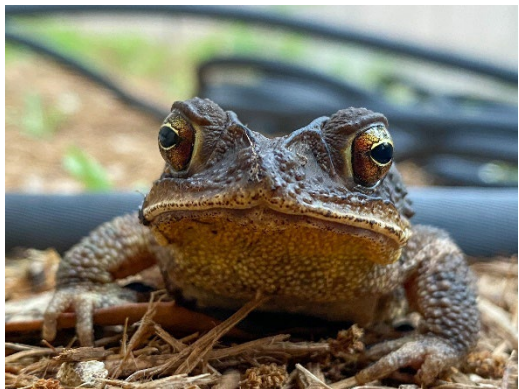
You will notice the log book does not display the number of hours beside each entry. If you edit that entry, however, the resulting screen will show you all the details for that entry.

VMS Questions

If you have questions, check out the “VMS” channel on Slack, attend one of the monthly VMS Q&A online meetings or email one of the chapter’s VMS administrators: Sheila Endres (sendres@gmx.com), Brenda Foss (bjfoss11@gmail.com) or Paula Biestek (cmoonbeam61@gmail.com).



L-R, Chapter hike at Snowden tract BCP, photo by Erin Hollis; Leading a hike at Wild Basin, photo by Janet Rogal; Part of chapter's Photography Interest Group hike for the best bluebonnet photos, photo by Ruthann Panipinto.



Some of the reasons we are TMNs: Top L-R, Texas Tortoise, photo by Martha Stockton; Black Vultures, photo by Samantha Banken; Bold Jumping Spider, photo by Mika Geiger. Second row L-R, Gulf Coast Toad, photo by Ashley Gregory; Praying Mantis, photo by Martha Stockton; Eastern Screech Owl (red morph), photo by Colette Pearce. Bottom L-R, Texas Spiney Lizard, photo by Deborah Turner Mack; Leaf Cutter Ants, photo by Kristin Hames; Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly, photo by Erin Hollis.