

Welcome to Balcones Canyonlands Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists

As a trainee in the class of 2024-2025, you are one of the newest members of our Chapter! You are 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 inspired 29 states and also Australia to create similar programs. Together, we are doing our part to improve habitat and the environment wherever we are. Please use every opportunity to **pursue whatever drives your passion for nature!**



Top row, L-R: Golden Cheek Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*), photo by Sara Schubert; Superb Green Cicada (*Tibicen superba*) emerging, photo by Andrea Lent; Yellow Passionflower vine (*Passiflora lutea*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Texas Eyed Click Beetle (*Alaus lusciosus*), photo by Rory Hearse. Bottom row, L-R: Green Tree Frog (*Hyla cinerea*), photo by Mika Geiger; Column Stinkhorn (*Clathrus columnatus*), photo by Skip Beard; North American Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), photo by Sam Voltaggio; Frostweed after freeze (*Verbesina virginica*), photo by Liz Lass.¹

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¹ The photos in this handbook (with the exception of personal portraits) were taken locally by our chapter members and associates. Hopefully, they give you some idea of the wonderful things you might experience in our precious Hill Country ecosystem. Copyrights retained by all photographers.

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 your chosen field of interest. 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 2024-2025 class, all the above requirements must be completed by December 31, 2025. If 40 hours of volunteer work seems intimidating, over 16 months, it averages to slightly more than 37 minutes per week! It seems to work best if you start volunteering at something early on and then, when you find something you love doing, those hours will seem to fly by! (If you need more time to complete requirements, the Chapter's board has the authority to approve extensions.)

After you initially certify, you can 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 within 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 4,000 volunteer hours or more.



Some of the beautiful places we work to protect. Top row, L-R: Wentzel Tract Austin Water Quality Protection Lands (WQPL), photo by Rory Hearse; Doe Skin Ranch area of Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (BCNWR), photo by Julian Yates; Snowden Tract, Travis County Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP), photo by Gene Janulis. Bottom, L-R: Copperfield Nature Trails, photo by Sara Schubert; Bats emerging from Bracken Cave, photo by Colleen Plummer; Icicles at Hamilton Pool, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.

About the Training Classes and Field Trips

Our Chapter's 2024-2025 training session consists of **online classes**, **in-person field trips**, and a final **in-person class** and an awards ceremony in January. 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.

See the calendar beginning on page [5](#) for the exact dates and times of all classes and field trips.

- **Online class** sessions open at 6:15 pm on most Thursday evenings. The initial 15 minutes is a good chance to bring up questions, for example, about your training, finding volunteering options, or tracking your hours. Instruction begins promptly at 6:30 pm and ends no later than 9:15 pm. Some instructors do not use the full time allowed but others do.
- **Field trips** provide training in locations that exemplify a particular class topic's concepts. Field trips are in person, the second Saturday of each month, Sept-Dec. There are six available trips, each with limited capacity. Sign up for *three* (only) of the six field trips. (There will be an opportunity to sign up for the waiting list of other field trips.) Each field trip begins with 1-3 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.
- The **Final Class** is in person, 11:30 am on Jan 18, 2025. It will be combined with a potluck lunch, member recognitions and awards.

All classes and field trips are recorded to help trainees who want to revisit the topic or need to make up a missed event.



Top row, L-R: Large Milkweed Bugs (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*) on Antelopehorn Milkweed (*Asclepias Asperula*), photo by Mika Geiger; Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) on Concordia campus, photo by Shayla Fleshman; Learning land restoration techniques at JJ&T WQPL, photo by Mike Kimmins. Bottom row, L-R: Nothing event at Concordia, photo by Deana Dossey; Dinosaur tracks and local geography field trip, photo by Kat Heath; Krameria (*Krameria lanceolata*), photo by Mary Cameron; Tadpoles, unidentified species, photo by Ruthann Panipinto.

Attendance Policy – Initial Training

Attendance at online classes is automatically recorded by the meeting program. Attendance at in-person events is recorded through sign-in sheets. You are expected to attend or make up every class and up to three field trips.

- All training classes and field trips are recorded, so a missed event may be made up by watching the recording. This procedure is detailed on page [37](#). Even if you did not sign up for a particular field trip, you may watch the recording to learn about the topic and you may optionally log those additional hours as advanced training.
- Alternatively, any missed class or field trip may be made up by attending a neighboring chapter's corresponding class. Contact Sheila Endres (sendres@gmx.com) for the schedule of neighboring classes.

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. Approval is evaluated 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 2025 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.

Certification requires 40 initial training hours. If you attend all classes and your chosen field trips, you will gain more than 40 hours of training. Hours beyond the 40 required may be applied toward your required advanced training hours. See page [38](#) for the procedure to credit advanced training hours.



L-R: Green Anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) shedding its skin, photo by Brenda Foss; tagged Monarch (*Danaus Plexippus*), photo by Curren Frasch; Northern Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), photo by Mary Cameron; Woolly Gray Moth *Lycia ypsilon*), photo by Caitlyn Lankford.



L-R: Unidentified ducks in nest, photo by George Brock; Oblique Longhorn Bee (*Svastra obliqua*) on Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*), photo by Mika Geiger; St. Andrew's Cross (*Hypericum hypericoides*), photo by Vicki Wold; Yellow Garden Spider (*Argiope aurantia*), photo by Robbie Sherfy.

2024-2025 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 these events (which are provided in the next section).

August 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
11	12	13 Chapter Meeting Zoom 7-9 pm	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Practice for Online Classes (optional) Zoom, 7-8 pm	23	24 Meet & Greet 4-6 pm
25	26	27	28	29 Intro to Chapter & Training Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	20	31

September 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5 Vols as teachers: Cit. Science: iNaturalist Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	6	7
8	9	10 Chapter Meeting Zoom 7-9 pm	11	12 Taxonomy Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	13	14 Native Plants field trip and volunteer 8:00 am-11 am Hist. Naturalists Native American Healing Plants field trip 1-4 pm
15	16	17	18	19 Herpetology Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Eco Regions & Concepts, Urban Eco. Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	27	28
29	30				29	

October 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 Forest Ecology & Mgmt Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 SGCN Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	11	12 Archaeology Gault Site field trip and volunteer 10 am – 2 pm
13	14	15 Chapter Meeting 7-9 pm	16	17 Mammalogy Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 No class. Annual	25 TMN	26 Meeting in
27 San Marcos	28	29	30	31 Ornithology Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm		

November 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Entomology Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	8	9 Land Mgmt JJ&T field trip & volunteer 9:00 am-12 pm Wetland Ecology Bull Creek Headwaters field trip & volunteer 1 – 4 pm
10	11	12 Chapter meeting 7-9 pm	13	14 Aquatic & Wetland Resources Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 Ichthyology Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	22	23
24	25 CONCORDIA	26 UNIVERSITY	27 OUT FOR	28 No Class THANKSGIVING	29 BREAK	30

December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5 [Alt. date for class, if needed]	6	7 Geology & Soils Leander Dinosaur Tracks & Avery Ranch Cave field trip & volunteer 9:30 am – 2 pm
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 [Alt. date for field trip, if needed]
15	END	OF	YEAR	HOLIDAY	BREAK	

January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	7	8	9 Weather and Climate Zoom 6:15-9:15 pm	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 Volunteer Fair 9-11 am Final class and Awards, Laws, Regs & Ethics 11:30 am - 3 pm





L-R, Familiar Bluet (*Enallagma civile*) Damselflies, photo by Mika Geiger; Gulf Coast Toad (*Incilius valliceps*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Golden-eye Lichen (*Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*), photo by Erin Hollis.

2024-2025 Training Class Schedule Details

Below are the details for the events occurring during the Balcones Canyonlands Chapter initial training session. Before each class or field trip, read the units in the textbook associated with that topic. The textbook explains each topic within a statewide context. Our training is customized to focus on each topic within the context of our local ecosystem. All classes and field trips are recorded.

NOTE: Field trips have limited capacity. Beginning August 1, you can 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. If you want to be added to the waiting list for any other training field trip, contact Holly Nellene (holly.nellene@gmail.com).

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
Thurs, Aug 22 7-8 pm	Online practice session (optional)	Are you unfamiliar with using Zoom or with online meetings in general? Practice with us! We hope to make our online classes stress-free for you! Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/94522260664?pwd=lyktARJF4g7fMU3PaNW e3ycuaosZg0.1
Sat, Aug 24 4-6 p.m.	Chapter Meet & Greet Location: Concordia University 11400 Concordia University Dr., Austin, TX 78726 Rm #C-122	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 welcoming gifts. <i>If you cannot attend this event</i> , contact your mentor to pick up your class materials before classes begin. Invitations to RSVP starting July 9. DETAILS: When you arrive at the campus, tell security that you are joining the Balcones Canyonlands TMN event. Park in Blue parking lot B. Go to the entrance near the Purple Rock Courtyard, between buildings B and C. If you need an elevator , it is in the hall to the right on the opposite side of the building from this entrance. Click here to see their campus map . Campus buildings contain water bottle refill stations, vending areas and bathrooms.
Thurs, Aug 29 6:15-9:15 pm	ONLINE TRAINING: Introduction to Training and Our Chapter	Instruction from chapter officers, members and advisors. (See page 23 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 available for learning and volunteering as a member of our Chapter. <i>There is literally an opportunity for every interest!</i> Zoom link for Intro Class

Signing in and getting class materials at Meet & Greet, photo by Terry Gearing.

Chapter board at retreat, Jan 2024, photo by Jaya Torres.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
<p>Thurs, Sep 5 6:15-9:15 pm</p>  	<p>ONLINE TRAINING: Volunteers as Teachers, Community Science and iNaturalist Intro (units 23 and 24 in textbook)</p>	<p>Katie Raney, Field Interpretation Coordinator for Texas State Parks, and Stewart Lefevre, Regional Interpretive Specialist</p> <p>As Master Naturalists, we become a point of contact between nature and our friends, our neighbors and others in the community. Ms. Raney and Mr. Lefevre will share some tips and principles of interpretation that will help you inspire the people you meet to acts of nature conservation and stewardship. They will also introduce us to the many ways we can contribute to community science, and the impact of our contributions upon current environmental research.</p> <p>Zoom link for Interpretation Class</p>
<p>Tues, Sep 10, 7-9 pm</p>	<p>Chapter Meeting, online</p>	<p>All are welcome to attend. See bctxmn.org/calendar for details.</p>
<p>Thurs, Sep 12, 6:30-9 pm</p>  <p>Examples: <i>Baccharis neglecta</i> (Roosevelt bush, poverty bush) <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>	<p>ONLINE TRAINING: Taxonomy (unit 10 in textbook)</p>	<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. She also explains taxonomic keys used to identify a particular plant or animal.</p> <p>Zoom link for Taxonomy Class</p>
<p>Sat, Sep 14 8 – 11 am</p>    <p>Left, Antelopehorn (<i>Asclepias asperula</i>) milkweed seed pods, photo by Janet Rogal. Right, Damianita (<i>Chrysactinia mexicana</i>), photo by Vicki Wold.</p>	<p>TRAINING FIELD TRIP: Native Plants Hike and volunteer (unit 11 in textbook)</p> <p>Location: 11400 Concordia University Dr., Austin, TX 78726</p>	<p>Dr. Mary Kay Johnston, Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Science and Conservation at Concordia University, Texas.</p> <p>We will begin the day learning about the chapter's Pollinator Gardens project and spend about 1 hour working on the pollinator garden at Concordia. About 9:30, Dr. Johnston will lead trainees 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.</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. Click here to see their campus map.</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. Campus buildings contain water bottle refill stations, vending areas and bathrooms.</p> <p>Invitations to sign up starting August 1.</p>

Sat, Sep 14
1-4 pm



TRAINING FIELD TRIP:
Historic Naturalists,
Native American Healing
Plants
(unit 4 in textbook)

Location: 11400 Concordia
University Dr., Austin, TX
78726
Rm #C-122

Marika Alvarado, Lipan Apache Medicine Woman (oftheearthhealing.org)

Ms. Alvarado will present the healing properties of plants that Native Americans have used for generations. After her presentation, trainees can volunteer on campus doing trail maintenance led by Concordia's Environmental Stewardship team.

DETAILS: When you arrive at the campus, tell security that you are joining the Native American Healing Plants talk. Park in Blue parking lot B. Go to the entrance near the Purple Rock Courtyard, between buildings B and C. If you need an [elevator](#), it is in the hall to the right on the opposite side of the building from this entrance. Click here to see their [campus map](#).

For the volunteer segment, wear comfortable walking shoes and bring work gloves. Tools will be provided. Campus buildings provide water bottle refill stations, vending areas and bathrooms.

Invitations to sign up starting August 1.



Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) on Agarita (*Mahonia trifoliolata*) in bloom, photo by Janet Rogal; right, Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), photo by Liz Lass.

Thurs, Sep 19
6:15-9:15 pm



ONLINE TRAINING:
Herpetology
(unit 15 in textbook)

Travis LaDuc, Curator of Herpetology, Biodiversity Collections, and Assistant Professor of Practice, College of Natural Sciences, University of Texas at Austin

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!

Zoom link for [Herpetology](#) Class



Photos at left, L-R, Black-necked Garter Snake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*), photo by Rory Hearse; Little Brown Skink (*Scincella lateralis*), photo by Lindsay Loftin; Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), photo by Skip Beard.

Thurs, Sep 26
6:15-9:15 pm

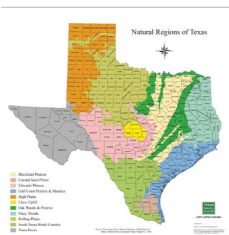


ONLINE TRAINING:
Ecological Regions and
Concepts, Urban Ecology
(units 4, 5, 6 and 15 in
textbook)

Natasia Moore, Urban Wildlife Biologist, TPWD

Texas has several ecological regions, each with identifying characteristics. Ms. Moore will guide us through the defining characteristics of our Balcones Canyonlands ecoregion and the special characteristics and challenges of its urban ecology.

Zoom link for [Eco Regions/Concepts](#) Class



*Natural regions of
Texas, from [Texas
Master Naturalist
Statewide Curriculum](#)*

Thurs, Oct 3
6:15-9:15 pm



ONLINE TRAINING:
**Forest Ecology and
Management**
(unit 17 textbook)

Camille Wiseman is a woodland ecologist with Texas A&M Forest Service that serves 10 counties Texas A&M Forest Service. She has broad experience with land management that includes riparian restoration, agricultural land management, and non-profit programs targeting conservation in central Texas.

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. Ms. Wiseman trains us about historical and current forest management practices that must continually adapt to protect our trees.

Zoom link for [Forestry](#) Class



Left, Escarpment Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina* var. *eximia*) in bloom, photo by Mary Cameron. Right, Texas Madrone (*Arbutus xalapensis*), photo by Janet Rogal.

Tues, Oct 8
7-9 pm

Chapter Meeting

All are welcome to attend. See [bctxmn.org calendar](http://bctxmn.org/calendar) for details.

Thurs, Oct 10
6:15-9:15 pm



ONLINE CLASS:
**Species of Greatest
Conservation Need
(SGCN)**

Wendy Anderson, Texas Nature Tracker Biologist, TPWD. She studied biology, Spanish, environmental science, and public affairs at Indiana University and has focused her career on GIS, endangered species conservation, and flora and fauna surveys. A Master Naturalist herself in the Capital Area MN chapter, she shares her passion for conservation and is excited to work with Master Naturalists on surveying and monitoring species in Texas.

Zoom link for [SGCN](#) Class



L-R, American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), photo by Deborah Turner Mack; Yellow Garden Spider (*Argiope aurantia*), photo by Vicki Wold; Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), photo by Deborah Turner Mack; Metallic Epauletted Sweat Bee (*Augochloropsis metallica*) on Lanceleaf Frogfruit (*Phyla lanceolata*), photo by Brenda Foss; Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum rufidulum*), photo by Mary Cameron; Redstriped Ribbon Snake (*Thamnophis proximus* spp *Rubrilineatus*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto.

Sat, Oct 12
10 am–2 pm

TRAINING FIELD TRIP:
Gault Archaeology Site
and volunteer work
(unit 2 in textbook)

Location: 3439 FM 2843,
Florence, TX, 76527



Gault Site entrance, photo by Kathryn Teich

Dr. Sergio Ayala, Executive Director of The Gault School of Archaeological Research.

The Gault Archeological Site near Florence, TX, has single-handedly moved human habitation of our area back thousands of years. Dr. Ayala leads a slow-paced hike, stopping at significant locations to explain how these earliest “Texans” 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.

Alternative dates are available for \$20 per person (see <https://www.gaultschool.org/tours>).

After the hike, earn volunteer hours doing TBD.

DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. Depending on the weather, you might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes.

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**. Cell phone service is not available during most of the hike.

Invitations to sign up starting August 1.



At the Gault site, etching possibly of mission, photo by Gene Janulis; various points and replica of etched rock found on site, photos by Christi Hastings.

Thurs, Oct 17,
6:15-9:15 pm

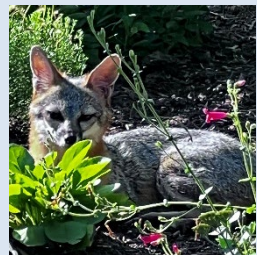
ONLINE TRAINING:
Mammalogy
(unit 16 in textbook)



Dr. Pamela R. Owen, Associate Director of Texas Science & Natural History Museum.

Mammals: No other vertebrate group has conquered the land (both on the surface and underground), sky, and water. We humans have complex relationships with fellow mammals and our activities have an impact on their habitat and behavior. Dr. Owen introduces us to what defines a mammal, the diversity of species in our area, and the beauty and utility of skulls for mammal identification.

Zoom link for [Mammalogy](#) Class



Gray Fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus), photo by Sam Voltaggio; Mexican Free-tailed Bat (Tadarida brasiliensis), photo by Colleen Plummer.

Thurs-Sun, Oct 24-27

TMN Annual Meeting, San Marcos, TX. For info, see <https://txmn.tamu.edu/2024-annual-meeting> (No class this week.)

**Thurs, Oct 31
6:15-9:15 pm**

ONLINE TRAINING:
Ornithology
(unit 12 in textbook)



Dr. Tania Homayoun, TPWD State Ornithologist and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor

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? Research shows a “bird brain” is something to be envied! Dr. Homayoun trains us about all this and more!

Zoom link for [Ornithology](#) Class



Left, Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*), photo by Brenda Foss; right, Hummingbird (unknown species) in nest, photo by Gene Janulis.

**Thurs, Nov 7
6:15-9:15 pm**

ONLINE TRAINING:
Entomology
(unit 13 in textbook)



Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist- IPM with Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension Service and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor

Entomology is the study of insects, but usually expands to cover other arthropods. Not only are insects and other arthropods an important source of food for a variety of other animals, they also play an important role in the ecosystem as decomposers, predators, parasitoids, and pollinators. Ms. Brown makes learning about these amazing animals fun and enlightening!

Zoom link for [Entomology](#) Class



Left: Dubious Tiger Moth (*Spilosoma dubia*) caterpillar, photo by Samantha Banken. Right: egg sacks of Yellow Garden Spider (*Argiope aurantia*), photo by Ray Carpenter.

Sat, Nov 9
9:00 am-noon



**TRAINING FIELD TRIP:
Land Management and
Restoration Techniques
and volunteer work**
(unit 20 in textbook)

Location: JJ&T tract,
15001 Kollmeyer,
Lakeway, TX

Jim O'Donnell, Forest Ecosystem Biologist with the City of Austin's Wildland Conservation Division

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 have been recognized by the EPA with top honors for Low Impact Green Infrastructure Improvement.

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.

DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. Depending on the weather, you might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Bathrooms are not available. Extra water/snacks and necessary tools will be provided. Parking is limited. Ask in our "training-class-2024-2025" channel in Slack about arranging car pools.

Invitations to sign up starting August 1.



JJ&T tract, examining berm work, photo by Vicki Wold.



JJ&T tract: Typical work days restoring land, photos by Vicki Wold.

Sat, Nov 9
1-4 pm



TRAINING FIELD TRIP:
Wetland Ecology and Management and volunteer work
(unit 19 In textbook)

Location: 11400 Concordia University Dr.,
Austin, TX 78726

Dr. Sam Whitehead, Associate Professor of Environmental Science, Concordia University, and Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Advisor

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.

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.

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.

Invitations to sign up starting August 1.



Trail to Bull Creek headwaters, photo by Sam Whitehead.



Three views of Bull Creek at Concordia, photos by Zach Stark.

Tues, Nov 12
7-9 pm

Chapter Meeting

Everyone is encouraged to attend. See [bctxmn.org calendar](http://bctxmn.org/calendar) for details.

Sat, Nov 14
6:15-9:15 pm



ONLINE TRAINING:
Water, Aquatic and Wetlands Resources
(units 9, 18 and 19 in textbook)

Lee Ann and Gordon Linam. He is an Aquatic Biologist, TPWD (retired) and she is a Wildlife Biologist, Wildlife Diversity Program, TPWD (retired).

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.

Zoom link for [Water/Aquatic Resources](#) Class



Training for Water Quality testing with LCRA, photo by Deana Dossey.

Nov 21
6:15-9:15 pm



ONLINE TRAINING:
Ichthyology
(unit 14 in textbook)

Stephen Curtis, Aquatic Biologist, River Studies Program TPWD

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.

Zoom link for [Ichthyology](#) Class



Photos from Inks Lake Fish Hatchery field trip taken by Michelle Tobias.

Nov 25-29 Concordia University Thanksgiving break (**No class this week.**)

Thurs, Dec 5
6:15-9:15 Alternative date for class, if needed.

Sat, Dec 7
8:30 am-noon



TRAINING FIELD TRIP:
Geology & Soils and Bio-Blitz
(unit 7 in textbook)

Dr. Nico Hauwert, Hydrogeologist

Location: Avery Ranch Cave, 9510 Morgan Creek Dr, Austin, 78717 and 92 Skyview Terrace, Leander, 78641

Our first stop, Avery Ranch cave, is owned and operated as a demonstration cave by the Texas Cave Management Association. 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. We will divide into groups. Group A will go into the cave first and group B will hear a lecture on local geology (including underground water). Then we will switch. If we have time, we will run a bio-blitz of the cave property for our volunteer segment.

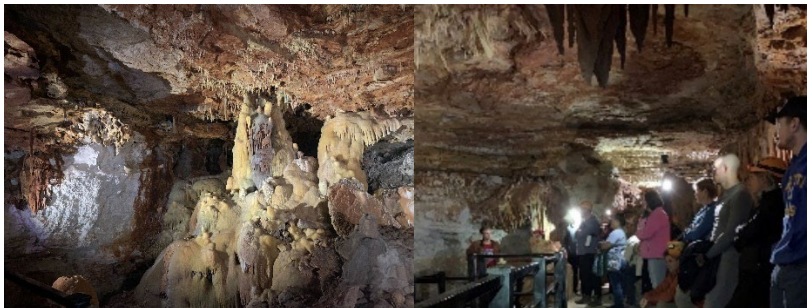
About 10, we will head for the Dinosaur track location. We might have to split into more car pool groups because this location requests no more than 20 cars park there. The South San Gabriel riverbed contains multiple dinosaur tracks, and they happen to lie beneath a bluff that demonstrates the geographic 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.

DETAILS: Bring your own food and drink. You might want sun and mosquito protection. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Bathrooms are not available. Helmets with lamps will be provided for the cave visit. Ask in our "training-class-2024-2025" channel in Slack about arranging car pools.

Invitations to sign up starting August 1.



Above, Dr. Hauwert lecturing about geographic strata. Below L-R, Acrocantosaur track with plastic model and sauropod track, photos by Kat Heath.



Avery Ranch Cave. Left photo by Caroline Emery. Right photo by Michelle Tobias.

Tues, Dec 10 7-9 pm	Chapter Meeting	Everyone is encouraged to attend. See bctxmn.org calendar for details.
Sat, Dec 14	Alternative date for field trip, if needed.	
Dec 15-Jan 8 BREAK FOR THE HOLIDAYS (No Class.)		
Thurs, Jan 9 6:15-9:15 pm	ONLINE TRAINING: Weather and Climate (unit 8 in textbook)	Avery Tomasco, Certified Broadcast Meteorologist, CBS Austin News 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. Zoom link for Weather/Climate Class
   <p><i>Left, Storm over Austin, photo by Ray Carpenter. Right, thunderhead, photo by Deborah Turner Mack.</i></p>		
Sat, Jan 18 9-11 am	Volunteer Fair. Introduce yourself to representatives from various organizations around our area and learn what you can do to help. Location TBD.	
Jan 18 11:30 am - 3 pm	IN PERSON potluck, Laws, Regulations and Ethics Class (unit 22 in textbook) & Chapter Awards	Join us as we celebrate the end of the training session. We will share a potluck lunch, enjoy our final class, and recognize achievements and milestones with awards! For our final class of the training session, Michael Mitchell, TPWD Assistant Commander Game Warden (retired) will teach us about the laws and regulations that govern our Master Naturalist interactions with our environment and with the public. 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. Invitations to sign up starting Dec 1.
  <p><i>Ethics change? Fashionable feathers and furs c. 1930s, uncredited photo from Internet</i></p>		



L-R, Golden Cheek Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*), photo by Collette Pearce; American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) collecting nesting materials, photo by Kristen Hames; Bird's Nest fungi Splash Cups (*Nidulariaceae*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Praying Mantis (*Stagmomantis* sp.), photo by Samantha Banken; Texas Iron-Clad Beetle (*Zopherus nodulosus*), photo by Mika Geiger.

2024-2025 Class Projects

This year, you have the opportunity to participate in up to three class projects, described in the following sections. Each project is designed to provide further training and volunteer hours while also addressing key needs within our local ecosystem. Class projects are also a great way to meet others within the chapter who share your interests.

Pollinator Gardens Class Project at Bull Creek District Park

This park lies at the lower end of Bull Creek Greenway centrally located off Loop 360 and 2222. An Austin jewel, you can see waterfalls over the limestone rocks, and large boulders draw rock climbers on weekends. Picnic benches under sprawling oaks provide a respite from the sun.

BCTXM is partnering with Capital Area Master Naturalists and Bull Creek Conservancy to install a pollinator garden there. BCTXMN is taking a lead role in the design and installation of the garden. This will make our seventh pollinator garden site in our service area! The class project is a great way to learn how to install a native pollinator garden, learn about native plants and pollinators, and build community while we are at it.

The class project will include both advanced training and volunteer hours. Below is a summary of dates; however, dates are subject to change. Participants can earn up to 5 hours of advanced training and 10 hours of volunteer time.

Project Timeframe

October 2024 - March 2025

Advanced training

Oct. 9. 6-8 pm via zoom. Native plant lists and garden design basics: Johanna Arendt and Karen Rosel.

Oct. 19. 9 a.m. Hamilton Pool field trip and workday: Visit a newly established garden, plant Q&A, basics in planting and maintenance. One hour of advanced training with 1-2 hours of volunteer time. Optional: hike and picnic lunch afterwards.

Dec. 14 OR Jan. 1. Plant Propagation with Erin. Erin Hollis will show how to collect seeds and start your own plants. Location TBD.

Workdays

Workdays with CAMN and Bull Creek Conservancy for site prep and planting:

Nov. 2. Site Prep

Nov. 11. Site prep day 2 (if needed)

March 1: Planting!!!

Additional workdays at this site and at other Chapter pollinator gardens are available for additional volunteer hours. Check the "pollinatorgarden" channel in Slack for updates.

Project Mentors

Shayla Fleshman shayla.fleshman@gmail.com, Johanna Arendt Johanna.Arendt@traviscountytx.gov, Karen Rosel roselkaren@gmail.com, Erin Hollis sillygirl508@gmail.com, Robbie Sherfy wsherfy@yahoo.com



Pollinator garden project crews on the job. All photos by Shayla Fleshman.

Map and Remove Invasives in Bull Creek Watershed Class Project

Removal of invasive plants is a key component in the restoration and management of natural areas. A Rocha USA and the Bull Creek Foundation have been collaborating to map and remove invasive plant species in the Bull Creek watershed since 2021. This project builds on the efforts of both organizations and dozens of community volunteers who have mapped invasive plants and advanced their removal at the Stenis tract (Austin Water Quality Protection Lands).

This will be a joint class project with trainees from Capital Area Master Naturalists. Participants will work in 3-4 person teams, each setting their own schedules for working their assigned acreage. Teams will be responsible for removing and managing invasive plant species in a designated area (2-3 acres of WQPL). Each team will have a designated team leader who checks out required tools and communicates with the Project Manager. Teams will use mapping data publicly available in the EDDMaps database and visual inspection of the areas to locate the invasive plants. Participants will remove or treat (girdle) Glossy privet and Nandina domestica and track their progress in the EDDMaps Pro application. The field work should be completed by the end of April 2025. After treatment or removal, teams will inspect their areas once a month and report progress.

Training and supervision will be provided by Verónica Godoy, Conservation Project Director for A Rocha USA, Jannelle Imken, and Karen Kerkering. To sign up for this project, email Karen Kerkering at kkerkering@hotmail.com

Location

Stenis Tract, 5479 Old Spicewood Springs Rd. (intersection of Spicewood Springs Rd. and Loop 360)

Project Time Frame

Nov 2024-Oct 2025

Training Dates

Oct TBD in-person class, November 16th field training

Time Commitment

Times for removal and follow-ups may vary:

- 2 training sessions (5 hours total)
- Removal and treatment (10 to 20 hours)
- About 4 follow-ups: (2 hours each)

Volunteer Hours

Log volunteer hours for this effort under **Nat Res Mgmt – City of Austin BCP** and mention Bull Creek Invasives class project in the description box. Because this is a volunteer effort, you may add up to one hour (total) travel time to each volunteer entry.

Project Mentors

Karen Kerkering – Project manager – kkerkering@hotmail.com

Jannelle Imken – Project assistant - jh.imken@gmail.com

Verónica Godoy - A Rocha USA Project Director - veronica.godoy@arocha.org



L-R: Bull Creek after a rain, photo by Sara Schubert; mapping invasives in Bull Creek watershed, photo by Vicki Wold; girdling invasives and removing invasives, photos by Veronica Godoy.

Class Project: Creating Video Visit to Friesenhahn Cave

One of Concordia University Texas' most valued properties is the famous Friesenhahn Cave in San Antonio. Besides the La Brea Tar Pits in California, it is believed that no site in the United States has yielded a greater variety of significant Pleistocene vertebrate fossils. The cave has yielded over 4,000 isolated teeth and bones of more than 30 genera of ice age mammals, reptiles and birds. Additionally, Friesenhahn Cave's distinct geological features have made it a focal point for researchers studying the interactions between ancient environments and the species that once thrived there. This site remains a testament to the diversity and complexity of life during the Ice Age in Texas.²

Friesenhahn Cave is a vital resource for academic research and public education on prehistoric life. However, the cave itself must be protected from too many visitors. Also, the terrain and access prevent visits from many people with disabilities.

BCTXMN is collaborating with Concordia University's cave management team to create an immersive "video visit" of Friesenhahn Cave. This innovative project will feature a 360-degree video tour, offering a virtual exploration of the cave's fascinating interior. The video will serve as an educational tool for Concordia students and BCTXMN trainees, providing them with a detailed and engaging view of the cave's unique geological and paleontological features. Through this partnership, both organizations aim to enhance understanding and appreciation of Friesenhahn Cave's historical significance.



Project Timeframe:

- TBD (Spring of 2025?)

Advanced Training:

- TBD

Project Workdays/Time Commitment:

- Pre-production (TBD hours spread out over time and people)
 - Scheduling, logistics, equipment checks, storyboard/script approval, and permissions
- Production day (full day, potentially 8+ hours)
 - Travel, safety check, equipment set up, filming, interviews (if applicable), equipment breakdown
- Post-production (TBD hours spread out over time and people)
 - Editing and review period, approval, distribution

Maximum Participants:

- 5-7 people (film crew and researchers) in cave at one time
- Others TBD

Project Equipment:

- Terry has: 360 camera, dslr camera & lenses, audio equipment, basic battery powered lighting, stabilizer tripod and extension pole, file storage, editing computer and software
- NEEDED: probably more battery powered lighting, any gear or equipment needed to enter, traverse, and exit the cave (ropes, harnesses, etc most likely provided by the cave experts)

Project Deliverables:

- TBD
- 360 degree video (need to discuss what this looks like as there are a few ways to get there)
- Possibly a documentary style video and interviews?
- Photos

Project Mentors:

- Zach Stark, Director of Concordia's Environmental Stewardship
- Jennifer Hofmann, PhD, assistant professor of Biology and Friesenhahn Cave Coordinator



² Photos from <https://www.concordia.edu/academics/school-of-natural-and-applied-sciences/friesenhahn-cave>

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 By-laws.
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.



L-R, top, *Antheraea polyphemus* moth, photo by Ashley Gregory; Spined Soldier Bug (*Podisus maculiventris*), photo by Caitlyn Lankford; Vermillion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus obscurus*), photo by Colette Pearce; honeybee (genus *Apis*) and Orange Sulphur butterfly (*Colias eurytheme*) on Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), photo by Mika Geiger. Bottom, L-R, Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), photo by Liz Lass; Dead Man's Fingers fungus (*Xylaria polymorpha*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Nautilus fossil, photo by Deana Dossey.

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.



Chapter members in action. Top row, L-R, Juvenile Plain-bellied Water Snake (*Nerodia erythrogaster*), photo by Mika Geiger; Planting pollinator garden at Concordia, photo by Gene Janulis; Dragonfly larvae, photo by Deana Dossey; Working the visitor's center at BCNWR, photo by Janet Rogal. Bottom row, L-R, Native plant propagation workshop, photo by Janet Rogal; Planting at Snowden Tract, BCP, photo by Mika Geiger; Planning Chapter initiatives at board retreat, photo by Robbie Scherfy.

Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Celebrates 10th Anniversary!

Our chapter is 10 years old this year! On May 11, 2024, we gathered at Travis Audubon's Baker Sanctuary to...what else?...to hike, photograph, touch, breathe in, and otherwise enjoy the nature around us!



L-R: 10th Anniversary cake, photo by Judy Osborn. A Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*) posed for us! Photo by Liz Lass. Ruthann guiding hike as everyone examines a mushroom, photo by Kat Heath. Jeremy leads one of the hikes looking for birds, photo by Lauren Shugart.

Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Documents

The documents that govern the conduct of the Balcones Canyonlands Chapter of TMN are available on our Chapter website, bctxmn.org, under the *Resources* tab.

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

Chapter Resources

Chapter Website: bctxmn.org; **State Website:** TXMN.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: Subscribe to the monthly newsletter on bctxmn.org. The newsletter is emailed the first week of each month.

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

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/people/bctxmn> (You must be logged into Flickr for this link to work.)

Chapter Administration

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



Advisors, L-R: Wizzie Brown, Dr. Tania Homayoun, Jeremy Hull, Dr. Sam Whitehead.

Honorary Members

Johanna Arendt, Travis County Climate Change Coordinator and former chapter advisor, Johanna.Arendt@traviscountytx.gov

Larry Root, past Chapter president, mescalitored@yahoo.com



Honorary members Johanna Arendt, left, and Larry Root.

Officers

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

Vice-President: Suzy Meriwether, suzymeriwether@gmail.com

Co-Secretaries: Erin Hollis, sillygirl508@gmail.com and Andrea Lent, a_arcand@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Gene Janulis, genejanulis@yahoo.com



Officers, L-R: Julian Yates, Suzy Meriwether, Erin Hollis, Andrea Lent, Gene Janulis

Directors/Committee Chairs

Advanced Training Director: Janet Rogal, jlr00912@gmail.com

Bat Acoustic Monitoring Project: Paula Levihn-Coon (levihncoon@gmail.com), Lauren Shugart (laureنشugart@gmail.com), Stephanie Putnam (stephanie.putnam@gmail.com)

Communications Director: Andi Kinnison, a.kinnison@gmail.com

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Director: Stephanie Putnam, stephanie.putnam@gmail.com

Historian/Archivist: Caitlyn Lankford, caitlyn.r.lankford@gmail.com

Hospitality Director: Paula Biestek, cmoonbeam61@gmail.com



Directors, L-R: Janet Rogal, Paula Levihn-Coon, Andi Kinnison, Stephanie Putnam, Caitlyn Lankford, Paula Biestek.

Membership Director (awards & certification): Brenda Foss, bifoss11@gmail.com

New Class Representative 2023-2024: Lauren Shugart, laurenshugart@gmail.com

Outreach Coordinator: TBD

Pollinator Gardens Committee Chair: Shayla Fleshman, shayla.fleshman@gmail.com

Technology Director: Zak Youngquist, zak.youngquist@gmail.com

Training Director: Sheila Endres, sendres@gmx.com

Volunteer Opportunities Director: TBD



Directors, L-R: Lauren Shugart, Shayla Fleshman, Zak Youngquist, Sheila Endres.

Training Committee Questions/Contacts:

Post your questions on the training-class-2024-2025 channel in Slack or email one of the following people:

Application Process: Lisa Landry lisalandry126@gmail.com

Attendance/Absences: Bow Brannon, brannonb3@gmail.com, or Christi Hastings, chastings40@gmail.com

Class Projects: Skip Beard, skip.beard@gmail.com

Field Trips: Holly Nellene, holly.nellene@gmail.com

Make-up Classes: Mary Cameron, maryfc2@gmail.com

Mentors: Bev Cusmano bacusmano@aol.com

VMS: Sheila Endres, sendres@gmx.com, Brenda Foss, bifoss11@gmail.com, Holly Nellene, holly.nellene@gmail.com

Zoom: Jen Westerman, jen.westerman3@gmail.com Lula Weller, lulaweller@gmail.com



Training Committee. Top, L-R: Skip Beard, Bow Brannon, Mary Cameron, Bev Cusmano, Terry Gearing, Christi Hastings. Bottom L-R: Lisa Landry, Caitlyn Lankford, Lauren Shugart, Lynette Swanson, Lula Weller, Jen Westerman. Not pictured: Cathlyn Coons, Holly Nellene.

Waters Specialist: Gene Janulis, genejanulis@yahoo.com

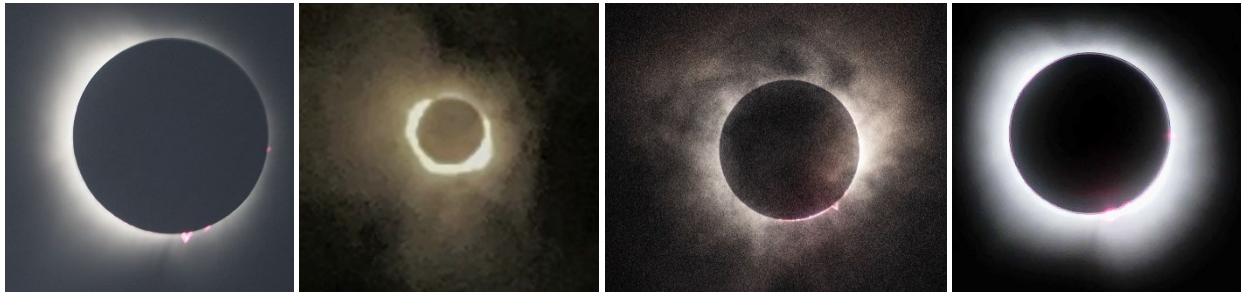
Waters Specialist Study Group: Zak Youngquist, zak.youngquist@gmail.com

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

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

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 might seem daunting, but that amount requires only 46 minutes (roughly) per week over the course of one calendar year. 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 commitments, such as the Pollinator Garden project, Golden Cheek Warbler nest resighting or water quality monitoring. Additionally, our members volunteer leading hikes, maintaining trails or working the visitor reception desk at locations like Westcave Preserve or the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (BCNWR). TMNs even worked with NASA to study the effects on nature during the annular eclipse on Oct 14, 2023, and the total eclipse on April 8, 2024. There are so many choices, your mentor can help you find volunteering efforts you will enjoy!



Pictures of the total eclipse, April 8, 2024, L-R taken by Gene Janulis, Jane Neu, Erin Hollis, and Caitlyn Lankford.

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 effort's 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.

The following sections provide more information about the volunteering opportunities our members currently enjoy. TMN volunteer projects must contribute to the TMN mission and abide by the above requirements. If you want to create or participate in a project not listed in this section, contact Sheila Endres at sendres@gmx.com. She will investigate whether your project qualifies for TMN volunteer hours.



L-R: Results of JJ&T restoration projects starting in full bloom! Photo by Vickie Wold. Propagating plants for pollinator gardens, photo by Rory Hearse. Training to guide hikes at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, photo by Sam Voltaggio.

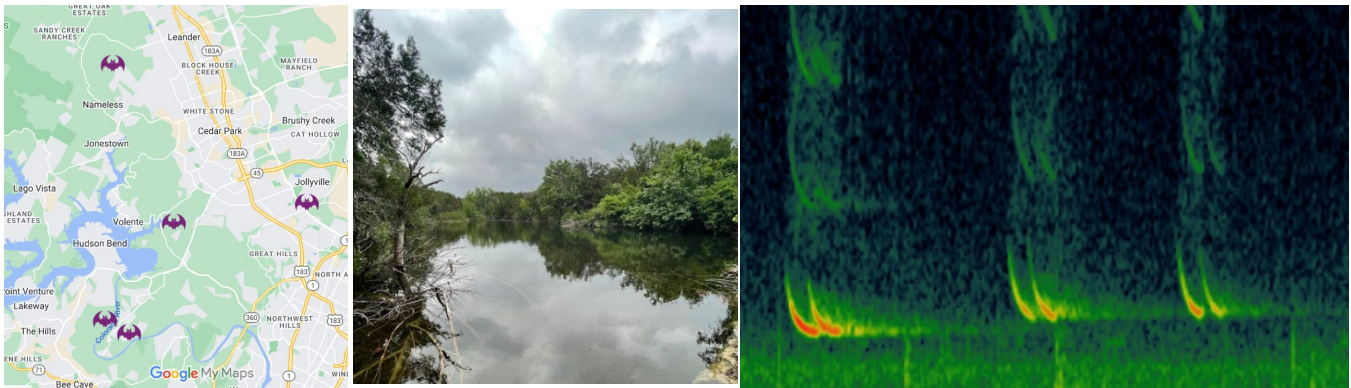
Balcones Canyonlands Chapter Projects:

Bat Acoustic Monitoring Project

Texas is home to 32 of the 47 species of bats found in the United States, with the largest urban bat colony found right here in Austin. Our Chapter is one of 42 Texas Master Naturalist chapters working with Texas Nature Trackers (TNT) to contribute to Texas Parks and Wildlife bat research and conservation. The data we collect goes to the North American Bat Monitoring Program, NABat, which is a collaborative multi-national effort to assess bat population status and trends. The TNT BAT project began in 2024, but its goal is long-term monitoring of the presence of bat species as measured by stationary acoustic monitoring.

Ultrasonic bat calls are recorded using a stationary device that is deployed on a weekly basis throughout late spring and summer. Volunteers scout locations for placement, deploy and retrieve monitors, coordinate with Texas Parks and Wildlife officials as well as private land owners to secure deployment locations and permissions. They also learn how to use sound analysis software to identify and classify bat calls. This is an exciting opportunity to learn more about these essential and enigmatic pollinators and to contribute to a larger effort to better understand and protect our native bats.

For more information or to sign up as a volunteer, please contact Paula Levihn-Coon (levihncoon@gmail.com) or Lauren Shugart (laurenshugart@gmail.com). To learn more about sound analysis software or to volunteer as a data analyst, contact Stephanie Putnam (stephanie.putnam@gmail.com).



Left, Map of where our Chapter is maintaining acoustic monitoring for bats, created on Google Maps by Paula Levihn-Coon. Right, area on BCP where our Chapter deployed its first monitoring station, photo by Lauren Shugart. Image of what bat calls look like during acoustic monitoring analysis.

Central Texas Plant Rescuers Project

Central Texas Plant Rescuers is a new, cooperative effort of our chapter, Capital Area Master Naturalists (CAMN), and Central Texas Seed Savers to create a volunteer group focused on mitigating the ecological impacts of ongoing development in Travis County. The volunteer group works with developers, private landowners and government agencies to secure permissions to harvest seed and plants from sites slated to be cleared for construction and finds them new homes with local preserve lands and conservation programs, native seed bank initiatives and even volunteer's own yards. The primary goals of the group are to rescue endangered or threatened plants and to preserve the local genetic diversity of our more abundant natives. The group also helps supply free plants and seed to other conservation-minded partners to help further their missions and offers volunteers a wealth of hands-on experience learning about native flora (identification, appearance variation, habitat preferences, growth habits, seasonal changes, etc.).

- **Rescue leaders** manage volunteers on site, flag priority plant species, text or email impact data and distribute plant donations.
- **Scouters** need strong plant ID skills because they scope our new rescue sites, flag priority plant species and create new species lists before each rescue.
- **Plant potters** pot up bare root rescued plants for donations to restoration partners and adjust/repot poorly potted donations.
- **Propagation specialists** grow out root cuttings of larger specimens for restoration and conservation partners and update the propagation spreadsheet with methods and progress to help us all learn.
- **Admins** are needed (no hiking required) to search city permits for potential rescue sites, find owner contacts, email property owners for permission to rescue plants, maintain a spreadsheet of prioritized sites and create registration sites for rescue events.
- **Outreach Coordinators** (no hiking required) speak with local groups about the rescue program, spread the word with realtors and developers and share rescue impact with property owners after rescue events.
- **Inventory specialists** (no hiking required) track the inventory of rescued plants on-site at rescue events.

To get involved, ask to join the private Facebook group where rescue opportunities and other program news will be posted <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ctxplantrescuers> or you can email ctxplantrescuers@gmail.com.



Left, Texas Milkweed (*Asclepias texana*) rescued from the Old Lampasas Dam site. Right, volunteers actively rescuing plants. Both photos by Ali Baucom.

Pollinator Gardens Project:

The BCTXMN Pollinator Garden program connects chapter members with communities throughout Travis County to install and maintain pollinator gardens using native plants. Since the program's inception, the chapter has installed s pollinator gardens in diverse neighborhoods including elementary schools, neighborhood parks, universities, and nature preserves. There are once-a-month workdays at various sites, and members can earn volunteer hours independently on their own schedule to water and help maintain gardens. Sign up on the "pollinatorgarden" Slack channel for updates.



Members volunteering at Chapter pollinator gardens (L-R) at Concordia Univ., at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, at Hamilton Pool and at Menchaca Elementary. All photos by Shayla Fleshman.

Volunteering as a TMN through Other Organizations

Children/Family Volunteer Opportunities

Members volunteer to introduce children and their families to nature and foster a love of the outdoors through the following organizations:

Candlelight Ranch provides educational and nature-based experiences for families and children of all abilities and needs to learn, explore and heal. Chapter member Adrian Dearmond is volunteer coordinator there. Contact her at adrian@candlelightranch.org or 512-619-9083. To volunteer directly from their website, click here: <http://candlelightranch.org/get-involved/volunteer>.

Texas Children in Nature Network (TCiNN) is a grassroots network of over 900 partner organizations and individuals dedicated to connecting children and families with nature through community outreach and engagement, nature-based programming, and special initiatives. For more information: <https://www.texaschildreninnature.org>

TPWD family-oriented outreach programs. To volunteer: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/volunteer>

- **Texas Outdoor Family** teaches families how to camp, put up a tent, build a campfire, cook outdoors, play outdoors, etc. To train to lead program like this: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/texas-outdoor-family-workshops>

- **Texas Buffalo Soldiers** makes connections between history and the outdoors. Families can learn how to track an animal, fish with a cane pole, cook over a campfire, play traditional games, use the sun to find directions, learn Native American skills, and even saddle a horse. For more info: BuffaloSoldiers@tpwd.texas.gov.
- You can also certify through TPWD to teach specific skills such as archery and fishing. For more information: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education>

Hikes and Stewardship

There are a number of local natural areas where our chapter members train to guide hikes, staff the visitor center, remove invasive animals and plants, improve habitat and/or staff events. Some of our members' favorite locations include:

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 garden.org/volunteer-opportunities>

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



L-R: Tagging monarchs at Zilker Gardens, photo by Janet Rogal; Leading a hike at Wild Basin, photo by Robbie Sherfy; Helping at Bridges to Birding workshop for children at BCNWR, photo by Janet Rogal.

Land Restoration and Management Projects

Our members work restoring soil, planting trees and other natives, removing invasive plants, building berms and swales, etc., on multiple tracts of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve through the following organizations:

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

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

City of Austin, Wildlands - <https://austintexas.gov/department/balcones-canyonlands-preserve>



Working at Vireo Preserve. Left two photos by Judy Osborn. Working at JJ&T. Center right photo by Vicki Wold. Right photo by Deana Dossey.



Chapter members working on various Austin Water Quality Protection Lands (WQPL) tracts. Left: Wenzel Tract, photo by Rory Hearse. Center left to right: Tabor Tract, Little Barton Tract, Medway tract, photos by Sam Voltaggio.

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

- The grounds around the Snowden House on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve 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 9-11:30 am. Don't worry if you don't see anyone signed up! We have a core group of 8-15 volunteers who don't sign up but are out there every Wednesday to work alongside you. Link to Signup.com for Snowden Wednesday: <https://signup.com/go/AOXtdfm>
- Join us in transforming degraded endangered species habitats into lush havens! Every 2nd Sunday and 4th Saturday (weather permitting), from 9 am to noon, we host Endangered Species Habitat Restoration workdays. Together, we care for newly planted vegetation, plant trees, scatter seeds, and construct brush berms. Your help makes a difference! Link to Signup.com to sign up for Endangered Species Habitat Restoration Workdays: <https://signup.com/go/AKFKpSe>
- Other fun exciting opportunities we offer include seed collection hikes, where we leisurely stroll while gathering native seeds. Collected seeds find a home scattered in degraded habitats of the BCP or in our Snowden Nursery. We also have trash cleanup, non-native invasive plant removal, and trail maintenance volunteer events. Stay informed about upcoming events by subscribing to our newsletter by clicking on [THIS LINK](#).
- Link to Travis County Hikes and Volunteering website: <https://www.traviscountytx.gov/tnr/nr/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 the 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.



Members enjoying the Snowden Tract experience. L-R, Working on native plant garden, photo by Gene Janulis; Pruning damaged trees, photo by Mika Geiger; Joining an interpretive hike, photo by Deana Dossey.

Native Plant-Focused Options

Chapter members help identify, plant, seed and monitor native plants and fungi through the following organizations:

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

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center - <https://www.wildflower.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, which lets you ride the bus and go to U.T. museums for free.)

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



L-R, planting oaks with Treefolks, photo by Deana Dossey; bird's nest at Vireo Preserve, photo by Joy Lin; Organizing hike at Travis Audubon's Baker Sanctuary, photo by Gene Janulis.

Water and Riparian Area Options

Chapter members assist in monitoring water quality, maintaining riparian habitat, removing invasive plants and animals, etc., through the following organizations:

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

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

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

Texas Stream Team - <https://www.meadowscenter.txst.edu/Leadership/TexasStreamTeam/About.html>



Left and center: Water quality testing, photos by Deana Dossey. Right, Bull Creek, photo by Ruthann Panipinto.

Wildlife Volunteering Options

Chapter members volunteer to protect, monitor, survey and in some cases rehabilitate native wildlife through the following organizations:

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

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

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

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

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

Travis Audubon:

- Baker Sanctuary - <https://travisaudubon.org/sanctuaries/baker-sanctuary>
- Chaetura Canyon - <https://travisaudubon.org/sanctuaries/chaetura-canyon>
- Blair Woods - <https://travisaudubon.org/sanctuaries/blair-woods>
- Commons Ford - <https://travisaudubon.org/conservation/commons-ford>

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



Common Musk Turtle (Sternotherus odoratus), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Eastern Screech Owl (Megascops asio), photo by Samantha Banken; Bumelia Borer (Plinthocoelium suaveolens), photo by Skip Beard.

Community Partner Organizations

Our chapter cooperates on projects with other organizations in our area, such as:

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

Austin Geological Society - <http://www.austingeosoc.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 Parks and Wildlife Department - <https://tpwd.texas.gov>

Online Community Science Opportunities

Opportunities that assist the protection of our natural resources and further scientific understanding, include the following:

Birds:

Audubon 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



Tri-color Heron (Egretta tricolor), photo by Samantha Banken

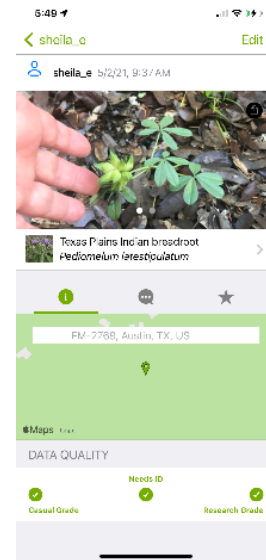
Climate Watch - audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch

Data Collections:

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

iNaturalist [inaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) Examples of projects include:

- Arachnids of Texas
- Birds of Texas
- Bees and Wasps of Texas
- Fishes of Texas
- Herps of Texas
- Insects of Texas
- Mammals of Texas
- Mushrooms of Texas
- Rare Plants of Texas
- Texas Freshwater Mussel
- Texas Milkweeds for Monarchs
- Texas Tortoise Task Force
- Travis Audubon Baker Sanctuary
- Travis County Flora and Fauna



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>



L-R, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*) on Texas Milkweed (*Asclepias texana*), photo by Vicki Wold; Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) on Common Lantana (*Lantana camara*), photo by Joel Day; Gray Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus*) on Antelopehorn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Blanket Flower Moths (*Schinia masoni*) on an Indian Blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*), photo by Brenda Foss; Sonoran Bumblebee (*Bombus sonorus*) on a Willowleaf Aster (*Symphotrichum praealtum*), photo by Liz Lass.

Weather:

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

Invasives:

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

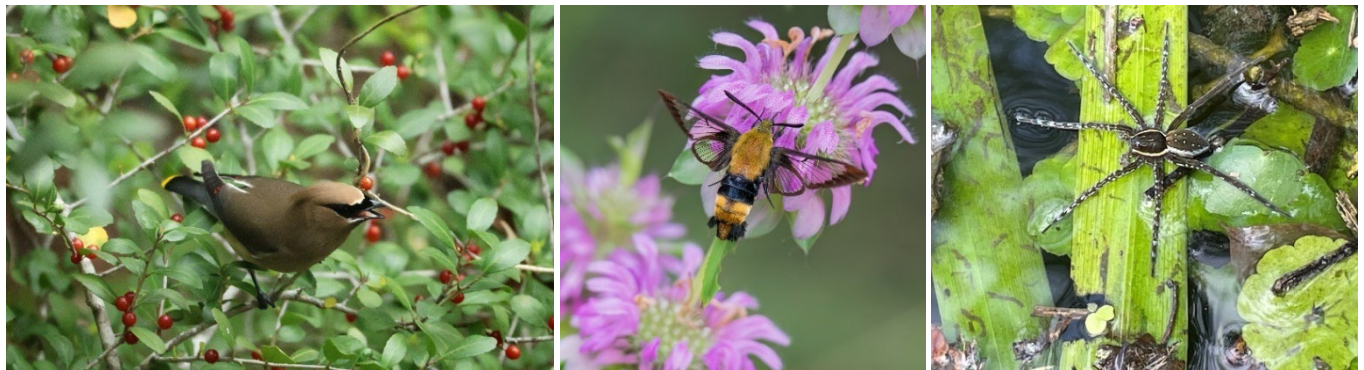
Cactus Moth Detection and Monitoring Project - gri.msstate.edu/research/cmdmn/cactoblastis_pf.php



L-R: Robber Fly (Family Asilidae) with prey, photo by Mika Geiger; Two-spotted Longhorn Bee (*Melissodes bimaculatus*), photo by Brenda Foss; Texas Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus olivaceus*), photo by Samantha Banken; Heart-shaped Engelmann's Pricklypear (*Opuntia engelmannii*), photo by Erin Hollis.



L-R: Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) on Texas Mountain Laurel (*Dermatophyllum secundiflorum*), photo by Gene Janulis; Several insects on Antelope Horns Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*), photo by Vicki Wold; White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), photo by Mary Cameron, Four-banded Stinkbug Hunter Wasp (*Bicyrtes quadrifasciatus*), photo by Mika Geiger.



L-R: Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) in Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), photo by Liz Lass, Snowberry Clearwing Hummingbird Moth (*Hemaris diffinis*) on Lemon Beebalm (*Monarda citriodora*), photo by Mika Geiger; Six Spotted Fishing Spider (*Dolomedes triton*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto.



L-R: "Skeletal" remains of cactus pad, photo by Erin Hollis; Texas Bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*) at JJ&T tract, photo by Vicki Wold; Unidentified fungus on Ashe Juniper (*Juniperus ashei*), photo by Sara Schubert; Edwards Plateau Five-Eyes (*Chamaesaracha edwardsiana*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto.

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 an annual 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.

Volunteer hours directly impact the federal funding for our state program. These entries are audited by federal agencies. Therefore:

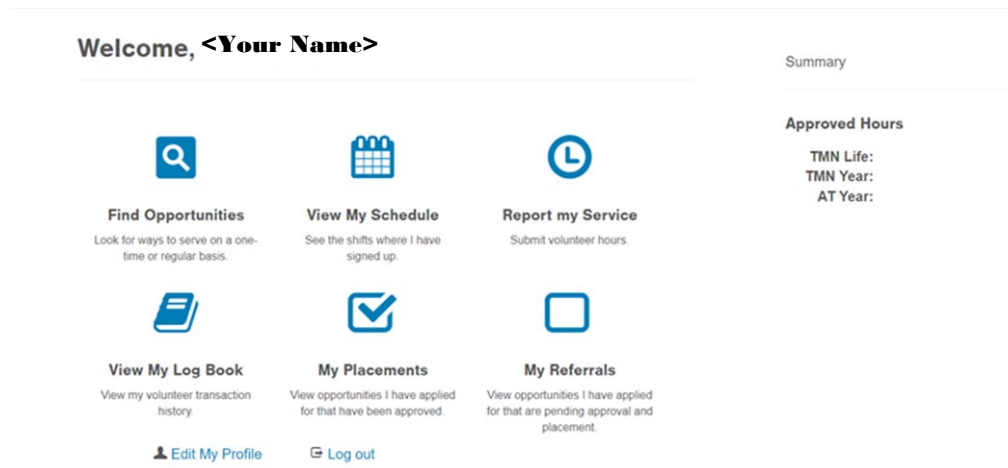
- It is important to keep track of your hours and to log them on a routine basis.
- Do not log your hours in advance. Only log hours after the work or class.
- To be approved by the audit, hours must be entered correctly. *They must be entered and approved within 45 days* of the original work. Also, you cannot log more than 8 hours in a single entry.
- 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.

If you have questions, post them on the VMS channel in Slack. Alternatively, 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.



Screen shot example of a 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:

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Report Service

Please select from the following survey(s):
_Initial Training:TMN Initial Training Hours

Opportunity Description:
Initial Training for new Members. Please provide the title of the class in the description.

Initial Classroom and Field Trip Hours

Date of the class or field trip: 05/19/2022

How many hours was the training?:

What did you think of the training?:

Describe your training:
(255 character limit)

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

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
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, an admin will email you and provide instructions on how to fix the problem. When there are no errors, they will approve your hours.

NOTE: If you attend all classes and your chosen field trips, you will gain more than the 40 hours of initial training required for certification. Training hours that you accrue beyond 40 may be logged as advanced training hours.

³ Field trips have different lengths of time for instruction. Your training committee coordinator at the field trip will tell you how many hours of instruction to enter for each specific event.

To Make-Up Missed Class or Field Trip

If you miss an initial training class or field trip, you can make up the topic by watching the recording. Write a one-page summary (convince us that you watched the recording) and then email the summary to Mary Cameron at maryfc2@gmail.com. She typically contacts you through email to discuss your synopsis. After she approves your synopsis, go into VMS and log the hours⁴ 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.

You may also use this make-up procedure to watch the recording of a field trip that you did not sign up for. Log these additional field trip hours as advanced training.

Volunteer Hours

From the *Report Service* drop-down box (see page 36), select the appropriate category. For example, if you worked in the visitors’ center at the BCNWR, select “Public Outreach: Balcones Canyonlands NWR.” 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 Bat Acoustic Monitoring project, select “Field Research: Bat Project Acoustic Monitoring.” A complete list of our Chapter’s VMS opportunities and their descriptions is bookmarked in your training class 2024-2025 channel on Slack and also under the VMS channel on Slack. If in doubt, ask your question in the VMS channel in Slack or email Sheila Endres (sendres@gmx.com).

If you volunteer in person, the Chapter board has approved that up to one hour (total) travel time may be added to your vol entry.

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).⁵
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 the impact data 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.
- Most Chapter meetings begin with a speaker who presents on a topic of interest. For these meetings *you will also* log one advanced training 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.

You may not log hours for watching the recording of a Chapter meeting.

⁴ Field trip recordings are often shorter in duration than the field trip itself. When logging hours for watching a field trip recording, use the amount of time on the recording.

⁵ VMS hours are digital. Round your time to the nearest quarter-hour. For example, an hour and fifteen minutes is logged as 1.25 hours. An entry for 90 minutes is 1.5 hours. An entry for 45 minutes is 0.75 hour.

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 must be cited but 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.

Training hours that you accrue beyond the 40 required for certification may be logged as advanced training hours. In this case, choose the option from the drop-down box that begins with “AT:” and matches most closely to the topic or event you are logging. If in doubt, ask your question in the VMS channel in Slack or email or Sheila Endres (sendres@gmx.com).

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 have their own opportunity names that you can select from the initial opportunities drop-down, such as “AT: TMN Tuesdays.” Log advanced training hours for watching any State-sponsored webinar, whether live or recorded, from the current calendar year.
- 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. 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.

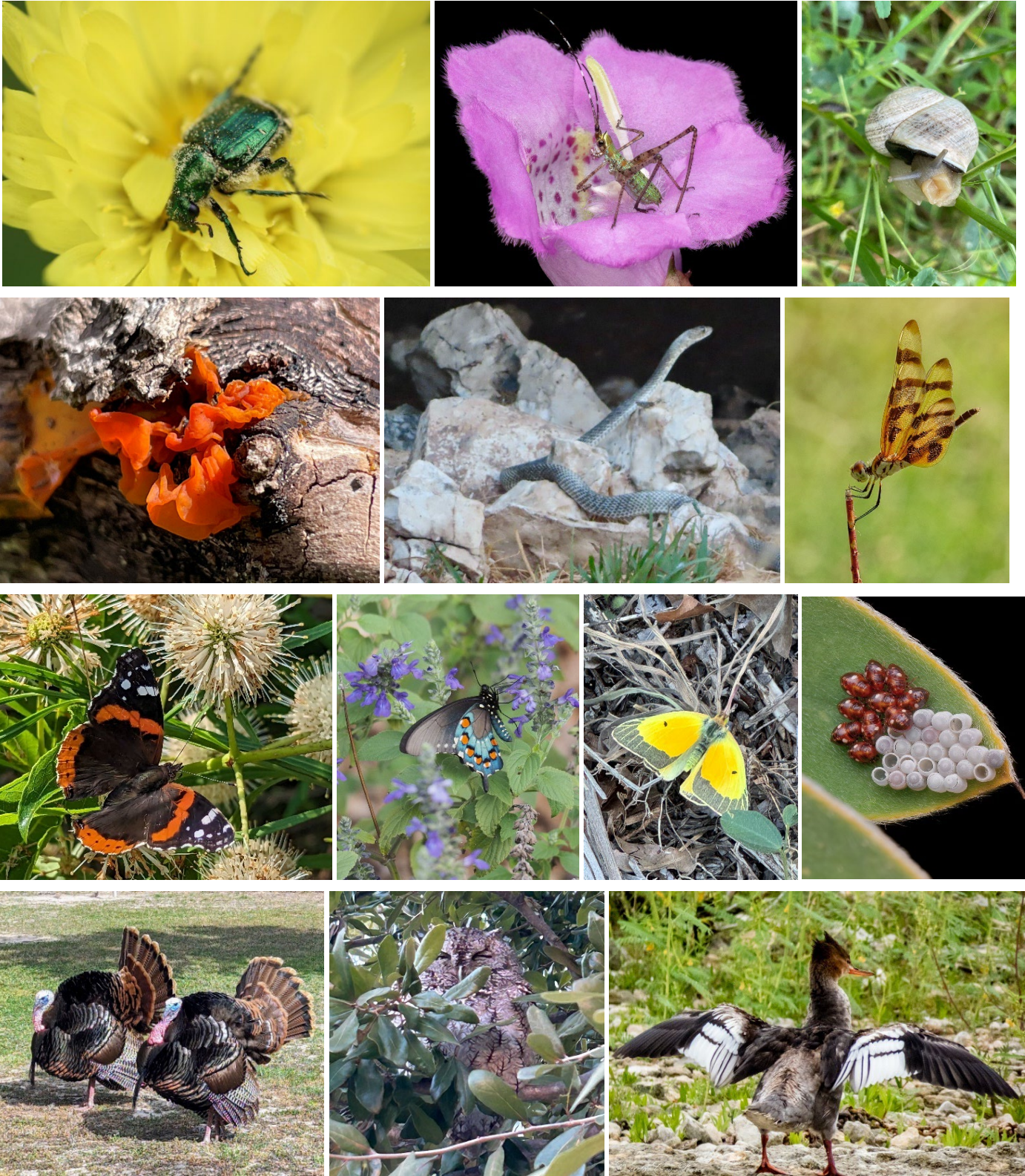
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18 May 2022	Not Yet Approved	0	
	Total	N/A	0	

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. You can use right arrow keys to move farther right on the screen and see your hours. Also, if you edit an entry, the resulting screen will show you all the details for that entry including the number of hours.



Bush Katydid (*Scudderia furcata*) nymph, photo by Mika Geiger; Milk Snail (*Otala lactea*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto. Second row, L-R: Witch's Butter (*Tremella mesenterica*), photo by Ruthann Panipinto; Coach Whip Snake (*Masticophis flagellum*), photo by Mike Kimmins; Halloween Pennant Dragonfly (*Celithemis eponina*), photo by Mika Geiger. Third row, L-R: Red Admiral on Buttonbush, photo by Brenda Foss; Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*), photo by Gene Janulis; Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*), photo by Judy Osborn; Eggs and newly hatched nymphs of Red Shouldered Stink Bug (*Thyanta custator*), photo by Mika Geiger. Bottom row. L-R, Wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*), photo by Rory Hearse; Eastern Screech Owl (*Megascops asio*) during freeze, photo by Jane Neu; Merganser (*Mergus merganser*), photo by Colette Pearce.