

25TH ANNIVERSARY



Back in 2003, one of our class field trips was to the Clear Creek Natural History Preserve near Denton. At that time, it was completely undeveloped, just 50 acres of Corps of Engineers land with long-term lease by City of Denton. There had been a couple of volunteer workdays there by UNT fraternities, but after 9-11-01, the corps had not allowed any more events.

Later in our class, we had a trip to the impressive Fort Worth Nature Center. At our lunch break, our class mentor, Carolyn Norgaard, asked what we thought of for a class project. I said it would sure be nice if Clear Creek could be like FWNC.

Jan Thompson sort of ran with the idea, with me as assistant. All the trails except the extant Fisherman's Trail were opened up. At that time, I had what is now a pretty primitive DR Brush Mower, and Fritz Poppe put in a lot of hours on the trails with it. One day, Jan and I bushwhacked from the quarry to the lower part of the 'prairie trail' to see if we could put in a trail there. There was brushy poison ivy all in there, 4-5 feet high! I think there is still no trail in that area.

Now, there is a building and a greenhouse, and a proper parking lot. The city does the trails, and has bought the area to the north, across Clear Creek. There are hundreds of second and fourth graders out there every year. Clay Thurmond oversees all kinds of projects. And I remember how, back in 2003, it was just a piece of land.

”
ABIGAIL MILLER,
ELM FORK CHAPTER



Storytelling PROJECT



25TH ANNIVERSARY



Historical record for the Collin County Texas Master Naturalist Chapter or the Blackland Prairie Chapter of the TMN.

"In the beginning...." Donna Cole and Mary Lou Cole of the North Texas Master Naturalists Chapter were working the registration table at a Landowner's Workshop at TAMU on Coit Road in Dallas during the late spring of 2005. LeRoy Thompson, a game warden for the TPWD, was in attendance and began talking with the ladies. During the conversation, he asked why there was no Collin County chapter of TMN as there were so many members in the NTMN chapter from that county. The reply was that, to start a new chapter, new chapter sponsors were needed from TPWD and AgriLife.

"Can a game warden be a sponsor?" he asked. Thus, an idea was born!

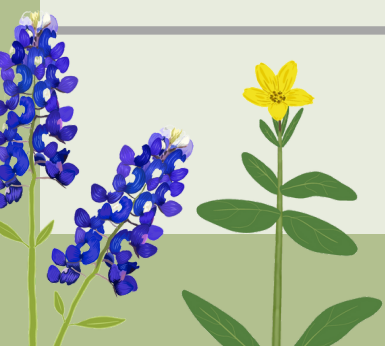
The summer was spent in discussions among chapter members, investigations into what would be needed, lists of required procedures, and finding potential chapter members willing to take on this task. In September, a meeting was held in Plano at a La Madeleine's Restaurant. In attendance were:

- > LeRoy Thompson, TPWD game warden and the first sponsor.
- > Donna Cole, from The Colony and the first acting President.
- > Sharon Meines, from east Plano, and Mary Lou Cole, far north Dallas in Collin County, did all sorts of secretarial work and kept records.
- > Ed Ellerbe of north Plano became the 501c3 "guy".
- > Tara Still of Hunt County became the first acting Vice President.
- > Sally Evans of far north Dallas (Collin County) became the first education chair.

”
**DONNA COLE AND SALLY EVANS,
BLACKLAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER**



Storytelling **PROJECT**



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By the time a second meeting was held at the beginning of October, LeRoy had found a site for meetings and classes at a fire station in Allen close to Central Expressway. In addition, Rick Maxwell of the AgriLife office agreed to be our second sponsor and provide office support. The fledgling (pun intended) Blackland Prairie Raptor Center provided many projects for volunteer hours, and several of their workers were eager to be in our first class. Sally had a twelve-week educational plan set up, potential speakers listed, and several field trip suggestions. It was decided at that time that it would be possible to begin classes the following February. Advertising ideas were discussed and put into motion almost immediately.



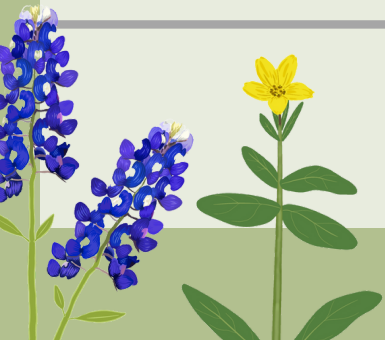
We did hold our first class that February of 2006, and with over twenty new members, we were able to qualify for 'chapterhood' and became THE BLACKLAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS!

Since that time, we have had capacity classes, awards, become known throughout the county for our projects and volunteer work, and been participants in the state conferences both as attendees and as presenters. Our chapter is a warm vibrant community. We now have our meetings at the Heard Museum in McKinney and have attendees both in person and virtually. We were able to continue our classes through the pandemic through virtual conferencing. We are proud to be a part of such a strong state chapter and to help in the celebration of their twenty-fifth year. May we all be able to continue the nurturing of our natural landscape and conserving our natural resources for the betterment of our health and wealth and the enrichment of the lives of our descendants.

”
DONNA COLE AND SALLY EVANS,
BLACKLAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER



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When I retired 8 years ago, we moved from Dallas to Austin to enjoy the outdoor life and benefit from what the city has to offer. My wife discovered Texas Master Naturalist, and we found this as our solution to enjoying nature and contributing to the environment. I am a birder, but TMN opened me up to all the things I didn't know.

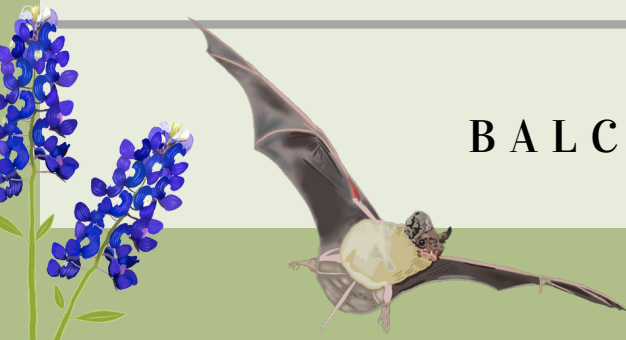
I have many favorite experiences, but I will describe only two. Visiting the Friesenhahn cave (privately owned), just north of San Antonio, with our chapter, was an amazing experience. To see mammoth tusks sticking out of the cave walls and to understand this was where the saber-tooth cat skeletons were found that now are on display at the University of Texas Memorial Museum in Austin was awe inspiring. The second experience was to participate in a coyote/fox survey on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, using wildlife cameras over a 6-month period. This was a research project for a local university to collect data on the species presence in densely forested areas. In addition, I got to either record other wildlife such as otters, rattlesnakes, deer, and even some trespassers, and get some great photos. Otters had not been seen before in the area, so that was a great discovery.

I am currently serving as President of the Balcones Canyonlands chapter and working on achieving many goals including growing our membership and increasing its diversity by making membership and participation easier for those in the work force and living in city environments. Our chapter is growing very quickly. Let's get people engaged, educated, and enthusiastic!

”
**JULIAN YATES,
BALCONES CANYONLANDS
CHAPTER**



Storytelling **PROJECT**



25TH ANNIVERSARY



A few years ago, I was on an overnight hiking trip on the Lone Star Trail. A little over a mile into section 2 of the trail, I entered a beautiful pine forest. The pines reached a height of probably 100 feet and as the topmost needles swayed in the wind, I enjoyed my favorite sound - wind blowing through treetops. I stopped and savored the moment. Two miles on, I crossed a forest service road and entered a different world. I walked through mud up to my ankles as I passed by stands of palmettos. That night, in my tent, I listened to the yips and howls of coyotes.

When I got home the next day, I was eager to write about the experience I had just had. Unfortunately, I found myself unable to reflect the richness of what I had seen. Of the pines, I could only say they were very tall. I had as little to say about the palmettos. I didn't know anything about coyote vocalizations - I actually thought the short yips sounded like puppies!



RUTH NASRULLAH,
HEARTWOOD CHAPTER



Storytelling PROJECT

25TH ANNIVERSARY



Realizing how limited I was in my ability to accurately share what I had seen motivated me to learn more. I started Googling to find a way to learn how to describe what I saw during outdoor activities. I landed on the Texas Master Naturalist program. It was something I had never heard of, but it sounded like a simple way for me to learn how to identify and understand the nature around me, which would help me to convey its beauty and complexity to others.

I enrolled in the TMN training program with the Galveston Bay Area chapter in 2020. About a year after my initial certification, I transferred to the Heartwood chapter. Even though I live in Clear Lake, I'm happy to be a member of Heartwood because I love the forest. I may have to drive 75 miles to a Heartwood activity, but it's worth it. Now, when I'm out hiking, I have the knowledge and the tools to learn about the world around me - the whispering trees, the howling coyotes and the muddy palmetto groves. And even better, I have the opportunity to care for the forest and its residents. Conservation and education are part of my life now. **Becoming a master naturalist was one of the best decisions I have made.**



RUTH NASRULLAH,
HEARTWOOD CHAPTER



Storytelling PROJECT

TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY



I have always loved the outdoors and everything nature! I am also an education addict. I want to learn everything I possibly can about our natural world. In 2020, I joined the Texas Master Naturalists then realized I wanted an even more in depth education. I also wanted to be able to pursue my outdoor dreams with an organization or company that would strive to make changes for the future of our environment. I went back to college and pursued the completion of my Environmental Science degree. After a year in, I was diagnosed with a disease that my husband and I decided would preclude any possibility of return on investment for the balance of my degree. I was heartbroken, but quickly rebounded and decided I would return to Texas Master Naturalist and give it my heart and soul!!!

I graduated from Initial Training last year and at the end of the year, became the Piney Wood Lakes Chapter's Training Director. It has been a dream come true for me, to help spread my love of nature and the outdoors, but also to help others pursue and obtain education about all things environmental!



TINA CRICHFIELD,
PINEY WOODS LAKES
CHAPTER

Storytelling
PROJECT



TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY



While I love native gardening, birds, butterflies, insects, snakes, wildlife, our Piney Woods, creeks and prairies all individually, my realization and understanding that all of these things are connected, is what has truly motivated my love of Texas Master Naturalists. It thrills me every chance we get to help educate and show our community how all of the different elements, affect our environment. Even more importantly, it is crucial to me to be part of an organization that helps teach others in the community how much they can impact our environment for good, and bad.

Every time I attend a seminar, workshop or class, or teach a workshop or class, I am so filled with joy to be in a place to meet others who share such a profound passion for our natural world!!!! Being a Texas Master Naturalist is truly a dream come true! I am forever grateful!!!



TINA CRICHFIELD,
PINEY WOODS LAKES
CHAPTER

Storytelling
PROJECT



TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY



2016: The Tenth Anniversary of the Blackland Prairie Chapter, and a Major Milestone is Achieved

During the Blackland Prairie chapter's 10 year of existence, a significant milestone was achieved. By 2016, the chapter had logged 100,000 volunteer hours since its inception in 2006! This achievement was recognized by the Collin County Commissioners Court, with the following proclamation (and a beautiful cake to mark the celebration!):

“WHEREAS the Blackland Prairie Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists was founded in 2006 to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service for the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their community; and,

WHEREAS, this dedicated group, in close partnership with and sponsored by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and many local groups, grew from its original eight volunteers to more than one hundred active members today; and,

”



**RICK TRAVIS,
BLACKLAND PRAIRIE
CHAPTER**

Storytelling
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TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY



WHEREAS, the Blackland Prairie Chapter has trained more than three hundred other volunteers through annual, intensive thirteen-week classes, presented by recognized experts in such fields as botany, prairie history, geology, meteorology and wildlife; and,

WHEREAS, the Chapter alone has contributed more than one-hundred thousand hours of volunteer service throughout Collin County in its ten years of educational programs in schools, community functions, and restoration or preservation projects; and,

WHEREAS, education, restoration, and preservation services to many non-profit and historical areas, such as the Heard Museum, Children's Hospital of Plano, and the Heritage Farmstead in Plano, and to the cities of McKinney, Allen, Wylie and Plano;

NOW, THEREFORE, the members of the Collin County Commissioners Court give their unanimous support and agreement that members of the Black Prairie Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists be acknowledged and recognized for their sustained dedication and service to the betterment of those who live and work in Collin County."

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**RICK TRAVIS,
BLACKLAND PRAIRIE
CHAPTER**

Storytelling
PROJECT



TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY



PHOTO 1: PICTURED AT THE PROCLAMATION CEREMONY, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: DAVE POWELL, STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND PAST PRESIDENT; LEROY THOMPSON, TPWD SPONSOR; RICK MAXWELL, AGRILIFE SPONSOR; DEBORAH CANTERBURY, PRESIDENT 2016-17; DONNA COLE, FIRST CHAPTER PRESIDENT; ED ELLERBEE, FOUNDER; AND SALLY EVANS, FOUNDER.

PHOTO 2: CEREMONY'S OVER, LET'S HAVE SOME CAKE!



”
**RICK TRAVIS,
BLACKLAND PRAIRIE
CHAPTER**

Storytelling
PROJECT



TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY



On a weekend trip to Austin in 2010, I discovered Bright Leaf Preserve, a little known 216-acre oasis surrounded by urban development. Then, as now, the preserve was accessible only by guided tour. On the morning my wife Susan and I visited, we were greeted by a woman wearing a bright green vest, which was adorned with dragonfly pins and a name tag that proclaimed she was a Texas Master Naturalist. We hiked four miles along a stream, up a hillside covered in Ashe junipers and oaks, and to a limestone ridge that offered a commanding view. Along the way our guide made well-timed stops to share a mix of natural history, geology, and native American lore, as well as the story of Georgia Lucas, the benefactor who made Bright Leaf her legacy through four decades of land acquisition. Our knowledgeable guide was providing interpretation, the art of connecting people with a natural space, something I would learn about through my own Master Naturalist training four years later.

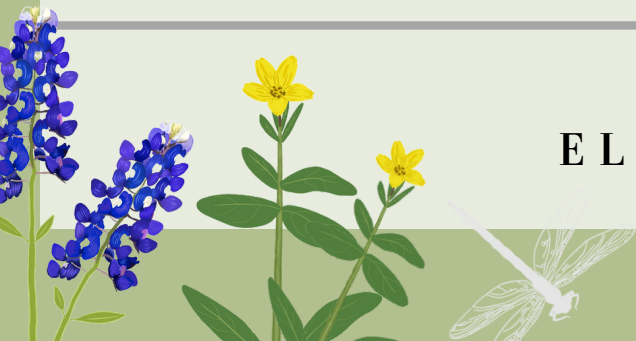
In 2014, while participating in a volunteer event, I met another Master Naturalist, Martha Richeson, who had recently trained with the Galveston Bay Area Chapter of TMN. That day she and I repotted trees for Exploration Green, a nature park in Houston that was in the early stages of development. We were also responsible for hooking up irrigation lines, so we had several hours to get acquainted. After talking to Martha about her training experience and recalling the woman who had first introduced me to the program at Bright Leaf, I contacted the training coordinator for the Gulf Coast Chapter and committed to becoming a Master Naturalist myself.



JERRY HAMBY,
ELM FORK CHAPTER



Storytelling PROJECT



TMN 25TH ANNIVERSARY

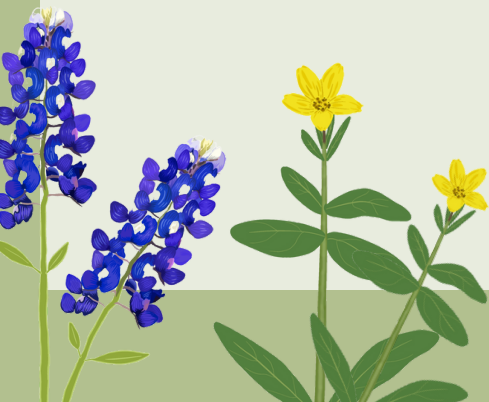


In the years that followed, I became a lead volunteer at Exploration Green, where I oversaw the growing and planting of more than a thousand trees and where I led my own interpretative hikes. Since moving to Denton two years ago, I have continued to expand my volunteer experiences—maintaining trails, monitoring bluebird nest boxes, and assisting with student field trips.

Along the way, I have recruited friends, colleagues, and students to join the TMN program. My only regret is not learning the name of the woman who started me on this amazing journey. I know that she belonged to the Capital Area Chapter, and I have a photograph of her from that day we met at Bright Leaf, but her name tag is indecipherable. If she is reading this, I want to thank her for planting the seed.



JERRY HAMBY,
ELM FORK CHAPTER



Storytelling PROJECT