

The Dragonflyer

Newsletter of the North Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists

John Wilt

QUARTERLY VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNER

Congratulations to John Wilt,
our first winner of the
Quarterly Volunteer Award.



Photo courtesy of Carroll Mayhew

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INSIDE THIS EDITION

<u>In Memoriam</u>	2
<u>Announcements</u>	4
<u>President's Page</u>	5
<u>Help Wanted</u>	7
<u>Quarterly Volunteer Award</u>	8
<u>2016 NTMN Class</u>	9
<u>Communication Survey Results</u>	11
<u>Junior Master Naturalist</u>	13
<u>Coppell Nature Center</u>	14
<u>Irish Festival</u>	15
<u>Chapter Administration</u>	16



In Memoriam

Jim Varnum

If I had a flag pole, my flag would be flying at half mast, honoring our fellow Texas Master Naturalist, Jim Varnum, who passed away April 25, 2016.

Jim was the best of the best of us. He was one of the founding members of NTMN, completing his class work in 1999. Since then, he has led more plant and bird walks than anyone, and logged well over 10,000 hours in volunteer service to the community. In addition, Jim was known for his always interesting “This & That,” and for approving and announcing volunteer and advanced training hour opportunities.

Although he was an engineer, he developed a substantial knowledge about birds and plants as a result of reading and self-study. His engineering discipline was shown in his pursuit of knowledge. If he did not know the name of a plant he would connect with others who could tell him, and then report it back to whoever asked him about it.

It was unusual to find a day when Jim was not traveling somewhere or exploring the meadows and woods. He put his knowledge and good sense of humor to great use as an excellent teacher to all the communities and TMNs in North Texas.

At the December 3, 2014 Awards dinner at Trinity River Audubon Center, The North Texas Master Naturalists honored Jim with a new award – **Award for Exceptional Service**. I had the privilege of giving the speech that night, and presenting him with a red cedar bench with a plaque attached that says: “Dedicated to Jim Varnum, Naturally.” The bench is now installed at Cedar Ridge Preserve.

It is impossible to replace Jim. He was truly one-of-a-kind, and we will miss him.

Jim Folger

Memories of Jim continue on the next page.....

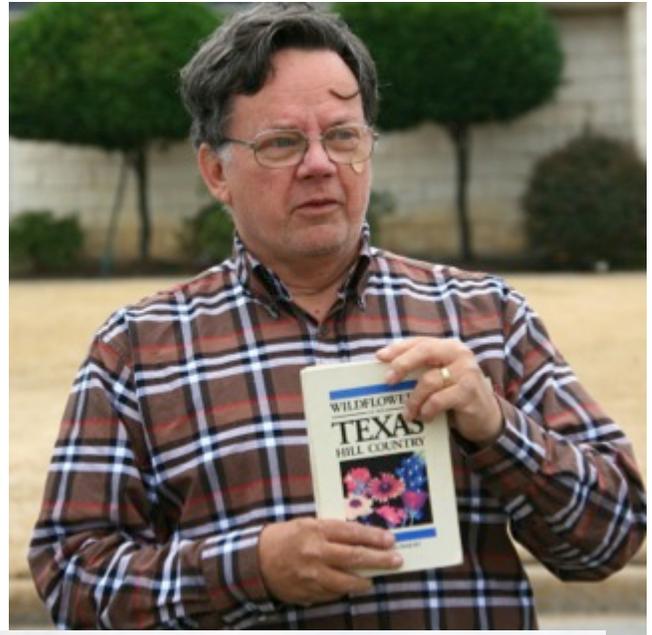


*The Dragonflyer has respectfully added this section to honor members who have passed.
Please forward information and obituaries to newsletter@ntmn.org*

In Memoriam



Photos courtesy of Carroll Mayhew



Rest in peace, dear friend

Announcements

Remember!

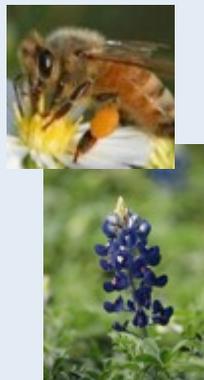
Native Plants and Prairies Day

This is our Spring Big Chapter Project

Saturday, April 30, 2016

10:00AM to 3:00 PM

Bath House Cultural Center on White Rock Lake



Chapter Meetings

*Time and **NEW** Location*

6:30-8:30 PM

Texas A&M AgriLife Research
& Extension Center
17360 Coit Rd
Dallas TX 75252

Wednesday, May 4

Speaker: Brett Johnson
"Feral Hogs and the new
DPARD feral hog plan"

Brett Johnson is a scientist with the City of Dallas Parks Department. He was formerly a TPWD Urban Biologist and the TPWD sponsor to NTMN.

Wednesday, June 1

TBD

Please watch the calendar for speaker updates and location

Find us on Facebook

www.facebook.com

[/northtexasmasternaturalists](https://www.facebook.com/northtexasmasternaturalists)

or join our group

"NT Master Naturalist Members"

(members only)



Update your profile!

You may choose to share your email and phone number with other North Texas Master Naturalists.

If you do so, the details that you share will be included on the Member Profiles page.

Your contact details will not be shared on the public site. Please see the help menu for instructions.

President's Page



A Message From Bruce

Bruce Stewart, Chapter President 2016

“The only one who likes change is a baby with a wet diaper.”

- Mark Twain

As we work outside to make a difference in the Dallas area we are also challenged to make changes in our operating procedures. In 2015 we went to a new website and quickly saw the benefits of how the new website handled our chapter's business: better communication of upcoming chapter activities through the new calendar and announcements on the home page, expanded listing of approved projects, and the photo and video postings that show our activities in the community. Several people helped to bring their part of the website to a higher level and our webmaster, Rick Murphy, made it all work together on our new website.

In 2016, we are changing the way we record volunteer and advanced training hours. We had a perfectly good system that our chapter had designed and refined over the years. Our members could quickly and easily post their hours. In the summer of 2015, we were told that the North Texas Master Naturalists would have to move to a new system used by one of our sponsors, Texas Parks and Wildlife, by the end of 2015. All of the 46 Texas Master Naturalist chapters throughout the state would begin to use the same system to report their hours.

Mary Mamantov, Director-Volunteer Service Projects, who is active in supporting VMS reports, says, “The reason for using VMS is because Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service rely on government money, from federal and state sources, and private support, such as foundations, to carry out much of their work. When all Master Naturalist chapters across the state submit data in a consistent format and with the proper coding, it streamlines the funding process. It gives the agencies the documentation they need to show the work that is being done and the public that is being reached, not to mention the value that we volunteers contribute. Providing this information is part of what we do to advance the causes of biological diversity, protection of the environment, and resource conservation. Thank you for putting up with the transition to this system and with those of us who are trying to manage it.”

President's Page

A Message from Bruce continued

The program, VMS, has been used by TPWD for years to track the programs that they provide to Texans for programs like archery skills and boating safety. The online program was modified slightly to track Master Naturalist activities as we enter our volunteer and advanced training hours.

In order to get NTMN up and running on VMS, we had to load all the data that we had accumulated since the chapter began in 1998. We had to upload 744 members' records which covered everyone who had ever participated in NTMN including 4,600 records of historical data, volunteer and advanced training hours, milestones (reaching 250, 500 hours, etc.), and certifications. All the historical data had to be reformatted to be compatible with the data stored in VMS. The uploads to VMS had to be completed by the end of 2015 so that we could begin to use VMS to record our hours starting in January 2016. We also had to enter the lists of volunteer projects and advanced training opportunities which would be tracked in the new system.

As you can see, getting VMS ready for use by our chapter was a monumental task at the end of 2015. When our members began using the system in 2016, we had to take it slowly at first to make certain that everything was working together as intended.

As is often the case, a committee was formed to take on VMS for the North Texas Master Naturalist Chapter and we were assigned a resource person by the state Master Naturalist office. The committee included Jim Varnum, Sara Beckelman, Mary Mamantov, David Reid, and Nelda Reid. The bulk of the work done on the VMS system was done by Jim, Mary, and Nelda. They have done their best to make our transition to this new reporting system as smooth as possible. Rick Murphy, our webmaster, also modified our website to include links to the VMS system on our VMS Portal page.

Thank you, everyone, for making the transition as easy on NTMN as possible.

When you see our VMS heroes at the next meeting, thank them for changing our wet diapers!

THANK YOU!
Jim, Sara, Mary, David
Rick and Nelda
VMS HEROES!



WE NEED HELP!

This section of the Dragonflyer highlights positions needed in our organization.

See the listings below.

Send position requests to president@ntmn.org

Adobe InDesign help:

We need someone who has access to and is fluent with Adobe InDesign software. We need to make some small updates to our Blackland Prairies Field Guide. Volunteer hours available. Please contact Whitney Wolf at communications@ntmn.org or call her on 214-738-2997.

Big Chapter Project coordinator:

This is a very detail-oriented project management job which will have responsibility for organizing the fall Big Chapter Project. Please email Charlotte Flowers at charart1234@aol.com to learn more about this job.

Yahoo Group project:

We are seeking someone to analyze our use of the Yahoo Group to determine if there is a better alternative. Please contact Bruce Stewart at president@ntmn.org if you are interested in this project.

2017 Regional Conference Planning

The seven Master Naturalist Chapters are planning a conference for April 1, 2017, which will be held at Briarwood in Argyle, TX. There will be speakers in the morning and afternoon speakers and walks led by experts. We need a NTMN or two to plan the event. The Blackland Prairie Chapter has the major role and each of the other Chapters will have representatives on the committee.

Jim Folger has worked with the committee to select the venue and the date.

If you have any questions or want to volunteer, please contact Jim at vicepresident@ntmn.org.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 23 at 11:00AM at Briarwood.

Member Recognition

Oak Cliff Earth Day Earthie Award

Congratulations to Annemarie Bristow

Winner of the Individual 2016 Earthie Award



Quarterly Volunteer Award

Continued from cover page

Congratulations to John Wilt!

Since completing his training in the 2014 class, John has been extremely active in several volunteer projects. In his first year, he double-certified and recorded 222 hours of VH. In 2015, he increased his volunteer efforts recording another 1,004 hours, earning both his 500 hour and 1,000 hour award pins. In 2016 he has already recorded 534 volunteer hours through mid-April.

John is a retired American Airlines pilot. He earned a college degree in Botany & Zoology and has a passion for nature which began when he was a youth collecting and rearing butterflies and moths. It continued into his teens as he became an instructor in natural science to young people at the local museum.

John owns a few hundred acres of forest bottom and wetland in Freestone County for which he wants to be a better steward. He recently completed building a cabin on the land which is operated by renewable energy and "off the grid," leaving a minor footprint. John has worked practically full time at Texas Discovery Gardens since 2015. Roger Sanderson, Director of Horticulture, said that he wholeheartedly endorses John's nomination for the award saying, "He helps me every single day!" David Parrish summed up John's nomination very nicely, stating, "No one compares to the energy, the hours, or the passion that this dude brings to the Master Naturalist program. He has written two articles for our Dragonflyer newsletter. He is the go-to guy who shows up to work and works hard. Texas Discovery Garden has an expanded Butterfly Garden because John was there to organize the workforce. TDG has a wider selection of plants for their Plant Sale because John helped rescue plants from future (ongoing) development plots in Garland. Twelve Hills can proudly display its Founders Tree, because John was there to clear the understory. Many an invasive has met its maker because John was on the job."

Marcie Haley also wants to give a shout-out to John who planted seeds and raised many flats of native plants for Twelve Hills. "He goes all over the city regularly helping plant trees. I witnessed this firsthand when he came to two tree plantings in our neighborhood. He's a quiet leader, leading by example, and provides help and advice for volunteers while doing the heavy lifting as well."

Finally, Dana Wilson added, "In addition to his hard physical labor, John has worked so hard to learn new material - he has become very good with plant ID and knowledgeable about many aspects of many ecosystems. I think he'll be a great instructor and walk leader in the future, too."



Photo courtesy of Carroll Mayhew

By Jim Folger

2016 NTMN Class

Fabulous 2016 NTMN Class

By Connie Koval

In January we accepted 65 applicants into our 2016 class and currently there are 51 completing their twelve weeks of class and three field trips. Attrition occurred mainly due to family health issues or the intern moving out of state due to their career. This year's class is as diverse in background and interests as it is in age ranges of the interns. The 3 new class projects that will be unveiled at the summer social in July include a Native Pollinator Trunk, a Trinity River Wetlands Trunk and an installation of interpretive signage at Spring Creek Forest Preserve in Garland.

For wetland, forest and prairie field trips we visited the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, Trinity River Audubon Center, Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area (LLELA), Spring Creek Forest Preserve, Connemara, and Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility (LAERF).

One challenge for the Education Committee was the receipt in mid-January of the new statewide Texas Master Curriculum that required we revise our subject matter tests. We sought from the cadre of teachers that are certified in our chapter a corps of volunteers who developed new tests and posted them online for automated scoring. What a talented bunch of folks!

I am very excited about the contributions this class will make to our chapter and more importantly to the communities we serve in North Texas. Please make them feel welcome as they become engaged in the volunteer opportunities we support.



Photos courtesy of Laura Kimberly and Connie Koval

Pictures of the April 9 class field trip to LAERF (Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility). Dr. Gary Dick led the trip and explained the aquatic plant research that is ongoing at this former fishery. We learned about native and invasive aquatic plants, were treated to a 7' alligator sighting and witnessed the emergence of dragonflies and damselflies just after Omar Bocanegra gave his presentation at the monthly meeting.



2016 NTMN Class

Continued from page 7



Enjoying the forest/tree field trip to TRAC (Trinity River Audubon Center) with Steve Houser and Jim Flood.

TRAC photos courtesy of Carroll Mayhew



LLELA photos courtesy of Susan Walters and Laura Kimberly

Field Trip to LLELA (Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area) on prairie restoration with restoration expert Richard Freiheit.



Communication Survey Results



Survey Says

NTMN Communications Survey February, 2016

INTRODUCTION

In February, a 15-question communications survey was conducted among NTMN members. The survey was prepared and sent out online using the SurveyMonkey research company. Members were asked via the NTMN Listserv to complete the survey and a reminder was sent out 10 days after the initial request. A total of 149 responses were received, the highest number ever for a survey, with over 50% of the chapter membership taking part.

Following are highlights of the responses, with findings and implications from the survey work.

FINDINGS

1. Two-thirds of our members use Facebook, with only 10% using either Twitter or Instagram. A full 30% use no social media at all. In separate questions, 47% never access FB on the public website and 64% have never “liked” or “shared” information on FB.

Implications: Social media is not currently a particularly effective way to communicate with members.

2. The website calendar (87%) and Jim’s This & That (76%) are the primary ways members find out about AT & VH opportunities. Announcements the day after the General Meetings (GMs) are “always” (54%) or “sometimes” (43%) read and represented the third choice for receiving information about AT & VH opportunities.

Additionally, 60% of respondents stated they did not want to spend time during GMs listening to descriptions of our various volunteer projects.

Further, when asked about the time for announcements at GMs, a majority of those who had an opinion (56%) said 10 minutes or less would be about right.

Implications: Shorten the time for announcements at GMs to less than 10 minutes and rely on the day-after follow-up to communicate the opportunities.

3. 54% percent of members use the website daily or weekly with another 36% accessing it monthly. The monthly calendar is most important to members (91%) along with VMS (85%) for recording AT and VH.

Communication Survey Results

Continued from page 9

4. The Dragonflyer is “always” read by 44% and “sometimes” read by 46% of members. Only 14% “never” read it. A total 37% of respondents said nothing needs to be done to improve the newsletter. Over 50% said that they wanted to see regular profiles of volunteer activities in the newsletter. Nothing else was significant as an improvement.



Implications: Have 2-3 of the volunteer opportunities profiled in each Dragonflyer. It will be a way to update and inform members about Chapter opportunities.

5. The Listserv is “always” read by 66% of members, and “sometimes read by another 21%. Only 14% “never” read it.

Implications: Listserv continues to be an important platform for communication.

6. Monday GMs are “very” or “somewhat” acceptable to 61% of members.

Implications: In addition to switching venues on Wednesday from time to time, also consider holding some meetings on Monday to accommodate those who cannot regularly attend on Wednesday.

7. A total of 69 respondents (48%) were “very interested” in attending a regional 1-day conference in 2017 at a cost of \$50.

In conclusion, the information gathered here will provide a framework for current and future communication approaches. Thank you to all of you who took the time to provide input.

For more information about survey results please contact Jim Folger.



Volunteer Projects and Activities

Junior Master Naturalist

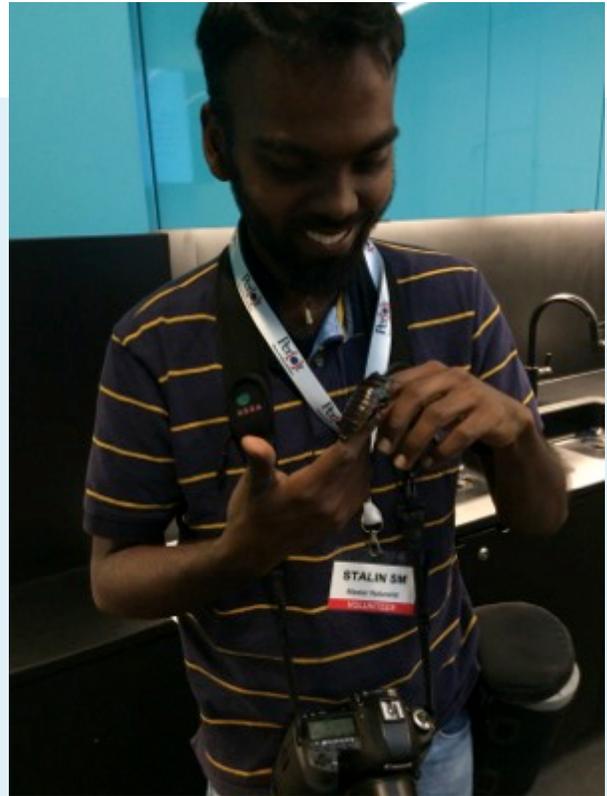
Natural History Mystery



Photos from Judy Parsons



Judy and Elaine at their station where they help students make a beetle vial.



Stalin SM playing happily and making friends with .. a.. cockroach? Eek!



Tim teaching bugs. One of his passions!

Volunteer Projects and Activities

Volunteer Opportunities at Coppel Nature Park

By Judy Parsons

The Biodiversity Education Center (BEC) at the Coppel Nature Park is situated on 70.5 acres of nature preserve within Wagon Wheel Park. The vision for the Center is to promote and provide hands-on environmental education. Its purpose is to facilitate adult and youth education at all levels—from academic to professional to hobby. Participants of the education programs, for both school and the community, observe and learn about local flora, fauna, and environmental sustainability issues, as well as develop a deeper connection to their environment through nature.

Mulching Trails/Maintenance Mornings

May 21: 9am to 12pm

June 18: 9am to 12pm

Assisting With School Field Trips

May 3: 3pm to 4:30pm

After School Language Camp Hike in English and Spanish

All Saints Catholic Church Mission Possible Work Days

June 13, 14, 15: 9am to 3pm

Dinosaurs, Fossils, and Rocks Summer Camp

June 13, 14, 15, 16, 17: 9am to 3pm

Wild Sundays at The Biodiversity Education Center

The Arts & Nature: May 22: 2:30pm to



North Texas Master Naturalists provided nature education to more than 600 elementary school students during a field trip to Coppel Nature Park.



Bob & Annette Tess clear trails at Coppel Nature Park.

Volunteer Projects and Activities

NTMN Booth at the Irish Festival March 2016



Photos courtesy of Natha Taylor

Master Naturalist Mission

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 our local communities.

Primary objective: Develop a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer network that can be self sufficient.

North Texas Chapter Administration

- ***President** - Bruce Stewart president@ntmn.org
 Goals Committee - Jim Folger goals@ntmn.org
 Speakers Bureau - Janet Smith speakers@ntmn.org
 Videography Committee - Jennifer Weisensel videos@ntmn.org
 Policies and Procedure Guidelines Committee -
 Sara Beckelman policy@ntmn.org
 Nomination Committee - Judy Parsons pastpresident@ntmn.org
- ***Vice President** - Jim Folger vicepresident@ntmn.org
 Programs and Special Events - Richard Grayson programs@ntmn.org
 Hospitality Committee - Angela Perez-Michael hospitality@ntmn.org
 Audit Committee - Stan Altschuler audit@ntmn.org
 Awards Committee - Jim Folger vicepresident@ntmn.org
 Resource Manager - *vacant* resource@ntmn.org
- ***Secretary** - Jo Lynne Merrill secretary@ntmn.org
 Historian/Archivist - Natha Taylor historian@ntmn.org
- ***Treasurer** - Linda Donnelly and David Reid treasurer@ntmn.org
- ***Volunteer Service Projects** - Mary Mamantov activities@ntmn.org
 Advanced Training - Jim Varnum advtraining@ntmn.org
 Big Chapter Projects - Charlotte Flowers
- ***Membership** - Nelda Reid membership@ntmn.org
 Volunteer Management System
- ***New Class Director** - Connie Koval education@ntmn.org
- ***Communications** - Whitney Wolf communications@ntmn.org
 Website - Rick Murphy webmaster@ntmn.org
 Newsletter Editor - Nancy Kraut newsletter@ntmn.org
 Facebook - Linda Cooke facebook@ntmn.org
 Photography - Carroll Mayhew photographs@ntmn.org
 Outreach - Rose Mercer events@ntmn.org
- ***State Relations** - Gary Barton representative@ntmn.org
- ***Immediate Past President** - Judy Parsons pastpresident@ntmn.org
- TPWD Advisor** - Sam Kieschnick Sam.kieschnick@tpwd.texas.gov
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Advisor** - Elizabeth Rudd
Elizabeth.Rudd@ag.tamu.edu

*Denotes Board Member

The Dragonflyer is published every two months.

Send your submissions to Nancy Kraut at newsletter@ntmn.org.



**Chapter Meetings
Open to the Public**
 First Wednesday monthly
 Social time at 6:30 PM.
 Meeting at 7:00 PM

Board Meetings
 The Monday before the first
 Wednesday each month at
 6:30 PM.

Visit www.ntmn.org for
 monthly meeting location
 and speaker schedule.