



RGV CHAPTER, TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS

The Chachalaca

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As new editor, I want to thank Leo Garrett for his years of service in editing this newsletter and for his seemingly infinite patience in helping me pull this issue together. Leo, you know I will be calling on you time and time again for your support and technical assistance.

I also want to thank all the contributors whose articles and photos appear in this issue. I hope everyone enjoys these stories and pictures as much as I have.

--- Karen

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RGVC MASTER NATURALISTS

THIS CHAPTER IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM JOINTLY SPONSORED BY TEXAS AGRILIFE AND THE TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT.

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President's Message by *Frank Wiseman*

RGV Texas Master Naturalists can celebrate another successful spring season. Our chapter graduated 13 new certified Texas Master Naturalists on May 13th at our graduation ceremony at Los Ebanos Preserve. Additionally we also added another 12 class completion members who will shortly complete their volunteer hours in order to certify. We welcome you all and hope that you will continue to serve as active and participating members of your chapter. There are always board positions to be filled and volunteer work abounds all over this great natural area we proudly call the Rio Grande Valley.

It was a pleasure for me to work with this graduating class as it was to work with other classes in the past. I know I speak for our Education Chair Paula Parson and our Host Chair Janice Koning that this training class was a "learning" experience for all of us as well. We had some very good speakers and excellent field trip work. Our training this year was outstanding.

I want to offer thanks to all of our members for the volunteer work they have done throughout the Valley this spring. Our members have had success on South Padre Island finding several new Kemp's Ridley turtle nests. Our first of the season was a rewarding experience for two of our trainees, Michele and Dave Robeson, who discovered their first-ever nesting turtle on the Island. Our congratulations also to Wendie Allstot and Mary Ann Tous for all the hard work they have done with our turtles this season. Our little turtle named Allison at Sea Turtle, Inc. is on the road to receiving her prosthetic limb soon. Your monetary donations to "our turtle" have been greatly appreciated.

As you will read elsewhere many of our volunteers have offered their time and efforts at Ramsey Park. Many have also volunteered at Estero Llano Grande in Weslaco, at Bentsen State Park in Mission and at the Valley Nature Center (VNC) in Weslaco. Diann Ballesteros and Christina Mild have led numerous children's school groups on guided tours through VNC. Diann also volunteered to serve as host for the Dragonfly Days festival sponsored by VNC and Estero Llano Grande. Virginia Vineyard offered many hours to this event also.

These are just a few of the places our members have worked, and I am sure that there are countless of you who deserve a big thank you from other organizations around the Valley... Jimmy Paz's crew at Sabal Palms also comes to mind. Jimmy offered his Audubon's Preserve as a training ground twice this spring for our training classes for amphibians and birds.

I want to thank the members of the Education Committee who served as volunteers to get the training class organized. Among those were Lee Lopez, Juan and Maria Bonnin, and Eileen Mattei. I hope that many more of you will step up this coming year to offer your services to help train our new members in 2009.

This summer is a good time to sit indoors and enjoy the cool air from the A/C but also a good time to think ahead and plan your volunteer activities for the fall season. There are many festivals to plan for and we do have a big event on June 28th for the children's festival that we help Sabal Palms present. The chapter needs you there to represent us and to help teach our children about nature.

August will see us electing new officers and board members. I sincerely hope that you all will think long and hard about serving your chapter in some capacity. We need you on the board. Change can only happen with new members and new ideas. When you receive a phone call from one of our election committee members, please consider serving as an elected officer, a board member, an at-large board member or a member of one of the various committees being established this year.

If you notice while reading this latest issue of *The Chachalaca*, Karen Fossum is now our new editor. Thanks, Karen, for a splendid job. We say goodbye to Leo Garret in that position and wish him well as he and Beth take off for another round of RV travel to parts east, with Florida being one of their main stops this year.

Lastly, I want to thank Martha and Taylor Blanton for their faithful service to our chapter over the years and for donating their beautiful Los Ebanos Preserve as the show place to hold our annual graduation/potluck/awards ceremony. Our potluck supper was bountiful as always and very much enjoyed. Our congratulations to our two outstanding trainee volunteers this year: Wendie Allstot and Jim Najvar. Congratulations also to the members who received milestone pins.

If you are planning vacations, take care, have fun, and plan for nature activities along the way.

2008 RGVCTMN GRADUATION

by Maria Bonnin

Tuesday, May 13 was our graduation for new members. It was held at the beautiful Los Ebanos Preserve. Martha and Taylor Blanton, who for the past 6 years have graciously made these facilities available to our chapter, were with us during the reception. They were recognized for their generosity towards our chapter.

Our guest speaker was Dr. Juan Enciso who addressed us about water preservation in the Valley; a very interesting and informative talk.

We welcomed 24 new members into our organization. Their unique qualifications were exalted by our President, Frank Wiseman. Our work for the environment and our projects are sure to

gain tremendously from the contribution of these new members. Welcome new Master Naturalists and let's put those talents to work ASAP. Please choose a project you like and go for it.

Some of our members received milestone pins during the evening. Paula and Janice who organized the event were recognized for their efforts.

Our thanks to all the members who brought the delicious foods we all enjoyed. The selection of salads, main dishes and desserts was incredible. Everybody had a great time and enjoyed themselves.



Front row: Preston DeShazo, Rebecca Johnson, Julie Morris, Wendie Allstot, Barbara Hausman, Cheryl Owen and Jennifer Watts Back row: Lisa Kay Adam, Jean Burgoine, Lupita Escobar, Tim Bradshaw, Eileen Mahone, Alex Hernandez, Mary Ann Tous, Dave Robeson, Michele Robeson, Ralph Hausman, Ed Tamayo and Virginia Vineyard.

More Graduation Highlights



Wendie Allstot and Jim Najvar were selected as outstanding trainee volunteers. Wendie is pictured above with Janice Koning, Host Chair, (left) and Paula Parsons, Education chair, (right).

Dr. Juan Enciso, featured speaker, shared his expertise on water in the Valley.



Robert Archer, pictured with Janice and Paula, received his 1,000-hour pin.

Thoughts from the New Graduates

YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT???? *by Cheryl Owen*

As a newly retired person and a new resident of the Rio Grande Valley, I was looking for something to do. A Master Naturalist/environmentalist was not on my retirement list of goals. Little did I know how excited I would be after enrolling in the Master Naturalist classes.

My love for the outdoors and prompting from my husband encouraged me to sign up. These classes were so informative and interesting. The speakers were very knowledgeable in their areas of expertise and the photos some of them provided were absolutely magnificent!

How to survive a field trip was a real learning experience. Just figuring out the proper attire and necessities was a trip in itself. The field trips took us to beautiful places in the Valley I didn't even know existed, and I've been coming down here for over 30 years!

Thanks to the RGV chapter of Master Naturalists for giving me a whole new perspective of the "outdoors" and for giving me a new niche in life. I truly am excited about it.

From Generalist to Naturalist *by Lisa Kay Adam*

I've always been a generalist, one to see the forest more than the trees. I've known a smattering of animal and plant names since childhood, but little more. On a nature walk this winter, the guide asked our small group what we hoped to see. Fortunately, I escaped the chagrin of answering "Birds!" by the 8 x 42-powered couple who wanted to add a clay-colored robin to their life list.

Like the good binoculars my fellow walkers wore, the Texas Master Naturalist class brought nature into close focus for me.

When Carol Brown brought hand lenses to our class on native plants, a common sunflower resolved into a complex composite landscape of golden rays, a dense field of fuzzy disk flowers, and a minuscule green inhabitant (not yet identified). Likewise, our foray into nature sketching with Linda McGonigle may not have uncovered a new Dürer, but it made me look more closely, thoroughly, and slowly. Following their contours with my pencil, I came to recognize the intricate ripple of the anacahuita bloom or the unfurling twist of a Texas baby bonnet seed.

Of course, if God is in the details, so to speak, so is the devil. I learned that many of the species so frustrating to identify were often named by scientists examining mounted specimens—and getting a close look at the more obscure parts of anatomy and coloring. Hence, the bird with a prominent ring on its bill becoming the "ring-necked duck." Or perhaps a little greenish-gray bird earning the name "ruby-crowned kinglet." I don't know if the same practice held true with the naming of dragonflies or damselflies. My notes from the lecture with Dr. Jonathon Rose, however, include such conundrums as "Ruby-spots can be red, green, or black," and "Spot-winged Glider's spots can be hard to see."

Daunting and long as the task may be, learning such details is important, especially for a generalist-at-heart like me. I better understand that the places I love are not just pretty places, but intricate worlds inhabited and created by countless species and individuals, as fugitive as they are beautiful. I better appreciate how difficult it is to recreate these worlds when they are lost or damaged. I won't forget the wetlands at Bahía Grande, recently re-flooded after decades of dry scouring by sand and wind, and the nearly-invisible little sticks bravely marking the water's edge. The sticks were stems of black mangroves, laboriously planted by volunteers who might see only a fraction of their handiwork survive, but who were remaking a forest, of sorts, one small tree at a time.

Turtles!

A Turtle Sighting *by Michele Robson*

After several days of entertaining city slickers from NJ, we decided to go to Boca Chica beach to fish. We drove our 4WD on the beach where the river comes in. It was not what a beach is suppose to look like. It was covered with debris, tires, buckets, discarded bbq grills, etc. We watched people on the river "fishing" with gill nets,

We didn't even want to fish there anymore so we headed back to the Laguna Madre. OMG, a Kemps Ridley came out of the surf heading for a place to nest. Dave even had on his Master Naturalist tee shirt so we were ready. We immediately got on the phone to Turtle. Inc. They walked us through the next 40 minutes. Needless to say our city slickers though we went "round the bend" We told them we couldn't leave until we staked the nest.

Lucy, from Turtle Inc., rushed over from the Island, tagged the turtle, did the DNA, took measurements and assessed the condition of the turtle. After we released her and she was in the water, we went to the nest. Once Lucy determined where the eggs were, she let us capture all 91 of them. It was an incredible experience and one we'll never forget. Not to mention our guests. If we had not gone through the Master Naturalist Program, it would have been just a turtle walking across the beach.

2008 Sea Turtle Nesting Patrol Season and Allison Update *by Wendie Allstot*

Several RGVCTMNs attended the March 28, 2008 training for turtle patrols on South Padre Island (SPI) and Boca Chica (BC) beaches taught by Dr. Donna Shaver and Cynthia Rubio of Padre Island National Seashore and Jody Mays of Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge. Specific training sessions for SPI foot patrols and SPI all-terrain vehicle (ATV) patrols were also attended by many RGVCTMNs on April 2 and 3, 2008.

Sea Turtle, Inc. and the US Fish and Wildlife Service coordinate sea turtle nesting patrols from early April through mid-July for the SPI beach from the Brownsville Ship Channel jetty to the Port Mansfield jetty (37 miles) and the BC beach from the Brownsville Ship Channel jetty to the Rio Grande River (7 miles). In addition to staff and interns of these two organizations, volunteers cover several of the patrol shifts on SPI. This season RGVCTMNs Wendie Allstot, Erin Bieberbach, Tommie Elium, Stephanie Gonzalez, Sherry Morrey, Cheryl Owen, John Tierney, Mary Ann Tous, Reuben Trevino, and Judy Walton are some of the volunteers that help with the patrol effort. (Linda McGonigle has patrolled during past seasons and plans to again when circumstances allow.) RGVCTMN Dave Moulder performs maintenance on the ATVs that are used for patrol.

John Tierney found the first SPI nesting sea turtle of the season (104 eggs) on April 12. This turtle was the first nester on Texas beaches. Wendie Allstot found a track on May 6 that led to SPI nest 15 (108 eggs) and a nesting sea turtle on May 22 (SPI nest 30 with 97 eggs). This turtle had previously nested on April 26 (SPI nest 9 with 101 eggs)—that day she was found and tagged by Sea Turtle, Inc. staff Lucy Guillen. Fellow RGVCTMNs Dave and Michele Robson found the first BC beach nesting sea turtle on April 24 (BC nest 3 with 91 eggs).

As of May 29, 2008 31 SPI and BC nests have been relocated to a safe corral in Isla Blanca Park on SPI for hatching. For the latest information on nests and projected hatching dates checkout www.seaturtleinc.com and click on the news link under the site navigation drop-down menu.



John Tierney with first nester of the season found on April 12th.

Allison Update

Allison is the one-flipped green sea turtle that efforts are being made to fit with a prosthetic flipper. In May Dr. Sellers and Dr. Cozad brought silicone samples to the Sea Turtle, Inc. Rescue Center and the best sample was chosen based on buoyancy and hardness. They also experimented with different widths of elastic material that could be used to attach the prosthetic and selected a size and diameter based on Allison's current measurements. Over the next month Dr. Sellers, using molds of Allison's flipper and stub, will construct the prosthetic. They expect to have a prosthetic flipper that will be attached by elastic band and Velcro for Allison to try out in late June.

Natural Educational Materials for Children *by Ralph M. Hausman, Ph.D.*

Texas Master Naturalists are in an ideal position to develop/produce hands-on, inexpensive educational materials for the children in our area. Collecting and properly preserving readily available, natural materials encountered in your daily activities, you can make maximum use of our renewable resources. Having youngsters on a field trip work with you further enhances the value of the learning experience.

For example, rock collecting on a field trip has always been an enjoyable activity (from toddlers to college age students), especially when someone finds a fossil or arrowhead for the first time. Following up with classification of their new finds expands the experience; something as simple as hydrogen peroxide or a small file really shows up the difference between limestone and flint. Then, there are all the different leaves we can find, dry in a press or between the pages of a book, and classify. When you match the leaves with digital, colored pictures of the tree/bush that produced each, more long-term learning occurs, especially if you can laminate them and compile a series of storybooks. (You do know, I trust, that the more 'hooks' or interconnections you are able to employ in an activity, the longer the memories last? But, 'brain-based learning' is a story for another time, perhaps.)

Naturally shed feathers, and the occasional deer antler, are great collector's items that can result in a wide variety of follow-up activities ... all involving reading and searching the library/internet. Even younger individuals need to know about the limitations imposed by the old Lacy Act in feather collecting. Too, do you know how to make a writing quill like Ben Franklin used, or how to loop the end of a feather quill to secure a feather on a hat-band or Indian headdress? Regarding deer antlers: If the TPWD's estimates of millions of white-tailed deer currently living in Texas and up to one-half of them being bucks that produce and discard a pair of antlers yearly are all true facts, then why aren't we hip-deep in discarded antlers in the brush? That's a great research project. Along with that question, do your youngsters know the difference between antlers and horns? Or, which American native species has branching horns that are discarded yearly like antlers?

How about tracks you come across? Are you always ready and willing to preserve them for later study when you encounter them? Do you know how to convert Plaster-of-Paris molds to rubber stamps? We have so many unique creatures in our area that it is a shame more tracks aren't 'collected' and, perhaps, shared with youngsters around the world thru the magic of internet! Then, of course, there could be a child's whole life's career stimulated by learning how to preserve specimens ('wet' and 'dry') collected in clear plastic!

All of these activities use natural, renewable resources to produce inexpensive learning materials that will solidify youngster's long-term memories ... and, have, in my experience with young learners! The techniques are easily learned if you are interested."

Thanks to the Chapter!

Envirothon Competition *by Tira Wilmoth*

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Chapter for the extremely generous donation of \$500 to the Rio Hondo High School Envirothon Teams. With the donation, we were able to purchase field guides for the teams. We purchased a wide variety of guides for birds, mammals, freshwater pond life, trees, and skulls. As soon as the guides came in the kids were checking them out from me so they could study.

I also want to thank two TMN members specifically for their help in preparing for this year's competition. David Benn came for a second year to give the kids pointers on bird identification. His presentation was excellent, the students learned a lot and enjoyed the presentation. Diann Ballesteros also helped tremendously by creating a book of pressed leaves from tree species of the North Central area. Those leaves really got the forestry experts ready for the competition.

The Envirothon is an environmental team competition for high school students in the United States and Canada. The teams of five students are tested in five areas of environmental science: aquatic science, forestry, soil science, wildlife biology, and a current issue. The first part of the competition is the field test. The teams go to five stations and answer questions using the skills and knowledge from the areas of specialty. For instance they may be asked to identify the dental formula on a skull or use a clinometer to determine the height of a tree. The second part of the competition is an oral presentation the teams give to a panel of judges. The teams only have three hours to prepare a solution to a scenario provided to them. They may only use the information provided to them and the knowledge they bring with them. The overall first place team receives an expense paid trip to the bi-national competition held for one week over the summer. The University of Northern Arizona is the site of the 2008 Canon Envirothon.

The 2008 Texas Envirothon was held in the Dallas area. This was Rio Hondo's second year participating in the state level of the Envirothon competition. This year we were still the only school from the Valley participating, plus we were the only school not from the Houston or Dallas areas competing. I am excited to report Rio Hondo Team A placed first in the soil science category. These students beat out students from 5A, 4A, private, and charter schools, many of those students are taking AP Environmental Science. All of the Rio Hondo team members worked very hard studying and researching on their own time and coming to the weekly meetings, I am proud of each of them.

Thank you again for supporting the Rio Hondo Envirothon teams.

Winter Bird Sightings *by David Benn*

The Rio Grande Valley of Texas has long been known as an area in which birds rare to Texas or even the United States are often found. This winter was no exception with several unexpected birds visiting the area from points south.

The first was a Dusky-capped Flycatcher that was located at Sabal Palm in early December. Dusky-capped Flycatchers, a *Myiarchus* flycatcher that is generally considered a Western bird, occurs in the United States in the Southwest, barely creeping over the border from Mexico into Arizona and New Mexico during the summer months. There is also a very small breeding population in the Big Bend area of Texas. The bird at Sabal Palm was identified as a Northeastern Mexico sub-species and appears to have been the only one of its kind in the United States. This bird remained at Sabal Palm into March, attracting many visitors.

In January a Golden-crowned Warbler, also a wanderer from Mexico, was located in the upper Valley. This bird was somewhat elusive and did not remain in the area long. Then, on February 9th, a White-crested Eleania was located at the Valley Land Fund lot on Sheepshead Street on South Padre Island. This bird was the first of this species to have been recorded in North America. The White-crested Eleania, a flycatcher-like bird, is a bird of southern South America. It is a migrant within its normal range and is known to stray out of its range. As a bird of the southern hemisphere where the seasons are the reverse of our own, when this bird seeks warmer temperatures, it heads north. This individual clearly overshot his usual haunts to visit the Valley. The bird was originally located in the afternoon and, as the word quickly spread among the birding fraternity, it was easily seen by many birders the following day. Sadly, the bird was no longer present on February 11th, leaving tardy birders, many of whom traveled long distances, without a look.

The final rare bird of the winter season was a Fork-tailed Flycatcher that was located on private property on March 15th. The bird, similar to the common Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, occurs as close as the Mexican state of Veracruz and was in the area for over two weeks. The property owner allowed escorted groups into the area to view the bird and this afforded an opportunity for many birders to enjoy this unexpected stray.

Official Tree Hugger by *Debbie Cox*

Master Naturalist/Master Gardener, Debbie Cox, was recognized for her environmental stewardship contributions to the community by the City of Brownsville Beautification Committee with a planting and dedication of a native Sabal Palm tree planted in her honor at Dr. Americo Paredes Elementary School during the 2008 City of Brownsville Arbor Day celebration. Over 1,100 students participated in the celebration of planting trees by reciting poems, singing songs and raising money to purchase and present an additional dozen trees to plant and add to the tree canopy at their campus. Debbie is pictured with the Brownsville city mascot, Rio, the red-crowned parrot, giving the newly planted palm lots of hugs. Everyone was treely inspired with the students tree planting spirit.



A Nature Safari in Weslaco by *Joyce Hamilton*

Robbie loves snakes and lizards, all kinds of reptiles, and he thinks spiders are cool, too. So, what better way to spend a Rio Grande Valley May morning than finding (and chasing) lizards at Estero Llano Grande State Park and World Birding Center, followed by a trip to the Valley Nature Center, where the opportunities for a budding young herpetologist are endless?

Robbie's mom, Adalia, is a lifelong RGV resident whose family has lived in the Valley for many generations. In the early part of the 20th century, her great-grandfather helped plant many of the beautiful, tall, aging palm trees that distinguish all the communities of the Valley. And Adalia's mother loves bringing the beautiful birds to her backyard feeder. The family's appreciation for the land and the soil are part of a proud history of migrant agricultural work and their deeply-established roots in the Rio Grande Valley. This fine family legacy calls for an introduction to some of the newer opportunities for enjoying the flora and fauna of our region.

So Adalia's Master Naturalist co-worker (yours truly) steps in, eager to introduce Robbie and Mom to all the wonders of local nature laid before me by my TMN training and volunteer work over the past few years!

We start out early, 8:00 a.m., to avoid the heat, and head to Estero Llano Grande, Weslaco's World Birding Center site, where sure enough we are greeted by countless 6-line racers darting about the walkway. Wearing our "safari hats", and armed with binoculars and a magnifying glass, we also take a look at some of the ants bustling about the dirt nearby. There are fascinating new sounds to learn about, the loud and insistent call of the kiskadee, and the call-and-response alarm of the chachalacas, one of whom ascends to the top of a tree, then flies off like a "chicken of the sky". Amazed by the size of the chachalaca, and intrigued by the call of the kiskadee, we continue on to the patio area, the gift shop, and the bird viewing area behind the restrooms, where we discovered a cardinal merrily showering in the sprinkler system. "Look at that beautiful, red bird!! What is that?!"

As the sun starts to heat up, we get back in the car and head down Business 83 to the air-conditioned VNC (Valley Nature Center), which was obviously designed with children in mind. Everything is exciting here: tortoises in a large plastic pool filled with sand, actually touchable (gently, just a little touch on the shell); animal bones, animal tracks, that wonderful bird call program on the computer, and oh my gosh, a live tarantula! After spending a little time gazing into the fish tank and playing with the plastic bones in a bucket, we discover the reading and game area, where Robbie and Mom (a reading specialist) are in their element with the great selection of children's nature books.

A quick stop in the VNC's store allows Robbie to stock up on a handful of plastic bugs and a magnifying bug case before ending our Safari and heading back to daycare. (By the way, we had fun telling the teachers and children at the STC campus daycare center about our fun morning. They knew about the VNC, but had not heard about Estero Llano Grande, so there could be a group of small people making a field trip in the future. Get the magnifying glasses ready!)

Our little May morning Nature Safari was two hours of adventure. Everyone learned something new, and we all had a super fun time. We plan to explore another of the Valley's fantastic nature opportunities in the near future.

Coming soon to *The Chachalaca*: "Robbie's RGV Nature Safari, Part II"

Ramsey Park's New Spring Facelift *by Frank Wiseman*

Over the months of Feb., March, and April our TMN members have volunteered about 700 hours improving the looks of Harlingen's Ramsey Park. The work has been arduous at times but rewarding in all aspects.

Much watering has had to be done to keep our garden spots alive and looking good during this period of drought in the Valley. There was much pruning done in early spring to eliminate dead branches, old growth and clear away unwanted limbs from overhanging tree limbs. With the watering and the pruning our native plants have taken on their spring growth and are now looking good. With the rainfall of almost 2 inches on April 27th, our park got its first drink of heavenly sent moisture. This will really help our plants survive during their growth period into the summer months that are approaching.

We had many of our new training class members as volunteers. Our thanks go out to them for helping with one big planting of 60 large trees and shrubs. The park received a donation of large burlap-balled trees and shrubs in the 6 foot range. Among these were "gaujillo, kidneywood, desert yaupon, and coma". We have to thank members Dave Robson, Lou Osborne, Ed Tamayo and Dick Roesler for doing much of the hole digging. Also helping out in this endeavor were members Michele Robson, Eileen Mahoney, Ginger Byram, Christina Mild, Diann Ballesteros and Frank Wiseman.

Other volunteers in the park this spring were Reuben Trevino, Erin Bieberbach, Cheryl Owen, Virginia Vineyard, Robert Archer, Drew Bennie, and non-TMN members Mei-chih Hsu, Bill Horton, Gloria Nelson, Bill Horton and Julia & Manny Duran.

Robert Archer has continued work in his spot that is called Hummingbird Trail. This garden is one of the top spots for bird watchers as Robert has hanging bird feeders for all the birds. Another good spot is the front entrance garden that Ginger Byram maintains in good shape. Many new native plants have been placed in this area also.

In Feb. we led a nature tour of the park in celebration of the Valley's Arbor Day, and it was well-attended by both the public and TMN members. In March our new training class was treated to a special native plant tour of the park and Mark Conway gave a class on bird-banding.

Our chapter has placed new signage at the park entrance on the fences to show the public the maps of the trails and our garden spots where benches are located. We also have placed a box where the public can pick up maps of the park to identify trails and resting spots.

We have to thank Dick Roesler for his tireless efforts in hauling wheel barrow loads of mulch to many of the needed spots. One of our TMN Trainees, Lou Osborne, volunteered over 60 hours during these months. We will miss him until he returns in Nov. to once again come and help out the regulars on their Monday and Thursday work days.

The Lovegrens from San Benito donated 150 plants to the park on April 27th and the work crew spent the last few days of April and the first few days of May planting these in many of our garden spots around the park. You will easily notice these new plantings because they will have little wire mesh cages around them to keep the critters from chewing off the tender vegetation.

Two of our new trainees, Rebecca Johnson and Virginia Vineyard, have done an excellent job of trying to get rid of the invasive castor beans on the south side of the park. They have also worked on raking up old glass from the upper Arroyo Trail. Many people fail to realize that Ramsey was once the dumping ground for all of Harlingen's trash. The reclaimed landfill now supports a flourishing native plant park.

With summer's heat approaching, we need volunteers to come and water at any time of the day. It is a good way to get in a few volunteer hours when needed. The plants and animal life will appreciate your effort.

Remember to bring your cameras along as you just might get that elusive bird or other critter you've been longing to capture on film or digital. Our two bobcats had a baby that was recently spotted up near the front entrance. A stroll thru Ramsey will often reveal fascinating blooms, butterflies, birds and others of nature's critters that love to hang out there. There is even a chachalaca that has only one foot but gets along just fine. Take a seat at hummingbird trail and enjoy the many birds that flock to Robert Archer's bird feeders. This is an excellent photo op place. If you took Linda McGonigle's Nature Journaling and Sketching class, Ramsey is the perfect place to improve your skills.

We invite all of you to come out and enjoy our birds, butterflies and critters that need our native plants to survive in our Valley's premier garden spot called Ramsey Park.

Final Photos

TMN Class of 2008 in session.



Tony thanking the education committee for their hard work