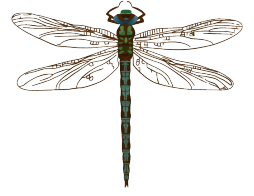


NORTH TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST THE DRAGONFLY



Welcome Back *Dragonflyer!*

Welcome back to the North Texas Master Naturalist's periodical. Since *The Dragonflyer* last zipped into mailboxes (volume 92, March 2023), NTMN volunteer projects have grown to 72 and membership to 350. Our shared work, serving as the face of nature for an urban region, is even more critical.

With this issue, *The Dragonflyer* launches a renewed effort to be a quarterly publication providing educational and informational content for chapter members and engaging with the organizations and groups with whom we volunteer. A dedicated editorial team has committed to be as agile and colorful, and have as keen a vision, as our namesake.

The Dragonflyer is now yours. Tell us about your projects, passions, observations, and favorite natural spots. Challenged by the written word? Provide facts and photos and we'll assist. Your contributions and ideas, or interest in joining our team, are welcome. Contact us at dragonflyer@ntmn.org.

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NORTHAVEN TRAIL: A POWER LINE EASEMENT TURNED POLLINATOR PARADISE

BY DOROTHY BUECHEL



Running nearly nine miles east to west from Central Expressway towards I-35, the Northaven Trail may at first glance seem like a typical neighborhood biking and walking trail. However, thanks to many volunteer hours it has blossomed into a vibrant corridor of native habitat. The trail is overseen by Dallas Parks and Recreation Department with a beautification agreement in place with Friends of Northaven Trail. Over the past few years chapter members and community volunteers have taken an active role in transforming the trail by planting thousands of native plants in meadows and prairie restoration zones, removing invasive species, and hosting a variety of outreach and education programs for the public and students. Recent activities include Monarch Butterfly life cycle presentations, an introduction to the Blackland Prairie ecosystem for high school students, as well as training for faculty and staff on how to use tools like iNaturalist, eBird, and Merlin to get kids interested in nature.

Over the past 18 months there have been a few notable expansions and new projects across the trail:

- **Six Native Garden Beds Maintained** - Volunteers care for six distinct pollinator garden beds, ensuring they remain healthy and thriving for the community to enjoy.
- **New Garden at Royal Park** - In the spring of 2024, volunteers installed a brand-new native plant garden at Royal Park as part of the Bring Back the Monarchs grant from the Native Plant Society of Texas. With no automated irrigation, this garden stands as a testament to the resilience of native flora—and our volunteers. Special thanks to Jim Hambleton, Ceci Behgam, Angela Perez Michael, and Jean and Mike Allen for helping maintain this area, and thanks to Adrienne Cortez for designing a plan for this space!
- **Expanding our Pollinator Patch at Welch Road** - Volunteers have worked tirelessly planning and planting the garden at the Welch Road intersection, adding more interest and habitat diversity to the trail. It all began with Adrienne Cortez designing a garden for implementation by Girl Scouts and has dramatically grown from there! Our goal is to have something blooming all year long.

- **Prairie Restoration Continues** - At sites west of Inwood Road and near the Freda Stern Parking Area on the east side of the trail, volunteers work to remove noxious weeds and introduce native grasses and forbs.
- **Youth Engagement and Education** - Students from St. Mark's School and the Episcopal School of Dallas have joined us on the trail to learn firsthand about ecological restoration, the importance of native species, and how a neglected utility corridor can be transformed into a thriving urban habitat. Special thanks to Dan Northcut who was the original St. Mark's club advisor for helping with the first restoration area.

As we look at the past 10 years, what originally began as a barren, mowed bermudagrass strip has transformed into a haven for pollinating insects, birds, and other prairie wildlife. Northaven Trail is now a flourishing green space, thanks in large part to the consistent presence and commitment of NTMN volunteers. Currently, we need more NTMN volunteers to lead the way through hands-on stewardship and maintenance, public engagement, and the persistent work of planting seeds, literally and figuratively, for future generations.

If this project interests you then please contact
Dorothy Buechel
dorothy@northaventrail.org 214-457-1640

iNat Species Feature

Cyrano Darner

Nasiaeschna pentacantha Photo by: [@carey8 on iNat](#)

Do you know the distinctive Master Naturalist dragonfly logo? Meet Cyrano Darner.

Named for the protagonist in a prominent 19th century play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, who had an abnormally large nose, the greenish-blue forehead of the Cyrano Darner (*Nasiaeschna pentacantha*) projects forward to make up 1/3 of the length of its head. Its genus name is derived from the Latin word for noses.

Its classic dragonfly shape, with detailed wings resembling a 19th Century naturalist's notebook drawing, made for a unique branding choice. Unlike other dragonflies, Cyrano does not hunt in the open and nabs its prey on the surface of leaves or branches rather than in midair. Here, Cyrano strikes the logo pose as it nabs an unsuspecting damsel fly.

Have any weird, noteworthy and exciting observations, or see something incredible posted in the iNat community? Share it with *The Dragonflyer* at dragonflyer@ntmn.org!



REPORT FROM SPRING BIG CHAPTER PROJECT AT TRAC

BY: BRENDA CATLETT

Clear skies and cool breezes set the background for a fun and productive day at the Trinity River Audubon Center (TRAC) on March 22nd, 2025. Over 50 hard working volunteers showed up for a day of field work, birdhouse building, fun and socializing. The day began at 8:30 am with TRAC leaders organizing the work teams.



Jake Poinsett led a group of chapter members in propagating and potting up rescued native grasses such as Little Bluestem, Eastern Gamagrass, and Broomsedge Bluestem. These grasses had been recovered from prairie areas destined to be lost due to construction and development.



Nathan May led another group out to plant some of these potted grasses in the prairie. His team dug the holes and put about 300 plants in the ground, covering a wide area. The planting team was followed by Joe Abrego's team who carried the water to the newly planted grasses. Luckily, rain arrived the days following the Big Chapter Project, so the grasses got a good start. Bruce Leiding had a large team of volunteers who were willing and able to attack the ever-present privet. Using loppers and privet poppers, they applied the muscle and energy to make a significant dent in the privet overgrowth in the forest area.

While these teams were busy, Dave Catlett led another group of five diligent volunteers to assemble and hang bird houses for prothonotary warblers. Dave cut the wood for the birdhouses in advance so the team could screw together the tops and sides to make fancy houses for these small warblers. Three were hung in trees facing the ponds in areas most appealing to these birds.



While all this was happening, a small but mighty group of NTMN kids worked on nature crafts under the big tent and then took a fun and educational hike with Laura Haynes.

REPORT FROM SPRING BIG CHAPTER PROJECT AT TRAC (CONTINUED)



At lunchtime, we all assembled outside in the picnic area to hear Nathan and Jake tell the story of TRAC, beginning years ago when the area was reclaimed from being a smoldering illegal landfill to today as a center for conservation and education.

Many thanks to all the NTMN volunteers who dedicated their Saturday morning to participating in the Big Chapter Project and for continuing the conservation work in our community.

iNat Species Feature

Mourning Cloak

Nymphalis antiopa Photo by: [@kenttrulsson on iNat](#)

With its striking coloration and wingspan, the recent arrival of the Mourning Cloak butterfly (*Nymphalis antiopa*) in North Texas has not escaped *The Dragonflyer's* notice. Its increased local population also caught Sam Kieschnick's eye.

According to iNat, few observations of the butterfly in Dallas County have been recorded since 2015, but observations in 2024 increased by 250%. Observations for Dallas County this year (as of March) have already exceeded those in all of 2024. Also known as the Camberwell Beauty after the South London location where it was discovered in 1748, this brush-footed butterfly has one of the longest lifespans of any butterfly, living 11 to 12 months and has a wingspan of up to 4 inches. They rarely feed on nectar, preferring primarily tree sap and rotting fruit, and, fittingly, play dead as a means of defense.

Have any weird, noteworthy and exciting observations, or see something incredible posted in the iNat community? Share it with *The Dragonflyer* at dragonflyer@ntmn.org!



FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE

BY: CALEB HINOJOS



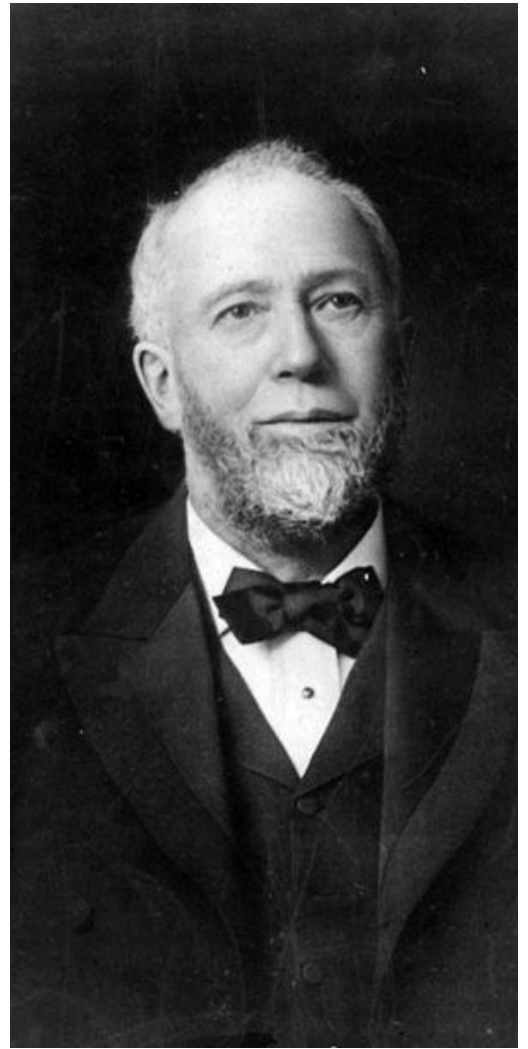
Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

When talking about North Texas it is impossible to leave out the Trinity River. Its serpent-like waterway cuts through the heart of Dallas County, after meandering in from the west. The sense of wilderness that it presents when walking through its forest can evoke a sense of anemoia harkening back to centuries when the west was still unexplored. However, it also forces you to see modernity around every bend. Along its banks lie iconic skylines, and the hustle and bustle of traffic is almost perpetual, binding the cities of Fort Worth and Dallas together in an ebb of flow of high speeds and gridlock. What makes this river more unique than most lies in the tragic events which threatened its inhabitants as well as those who lived along its banks. Fortunately, it was able to withstand the atrocities, and has provided us with a story unlike any other.

After initial attempts to tame the western frontier proved insufficient, the United States military stepped in and established a small outpost near the confluence of the West and Clear Forks of the Trinity in the fall of 1849. Over the next four years the area would become settled enough to support over 300 citizens, and the military would eventually leave in order to push the frontier line for western expansion. The infrastructure which had been recently vacated was a draw for other settlers to search for a life in the area, and after a contentious election that featured a siphoned barrel of whiskey, the country seat moved from Birdsville to Fort Worth. Over the next few decades Fort Worth would become a major player in life out west for two core reasons. The first was due to it becoming a stop along the historic Chisholm Trail, which was used by cattle ranchers to drive their herds to Kansas so they could be shipped to the eastern United States. The other reason was the Texas and Pacific Railway. Although the Wall Street-backed funding initially folded, causing a large portion of the citizenry to exit the area, those who stayed saw the railroad as a symbol of growth and were determined to get it built. This mission was eventually completed and the first railcar entered the city in the summer of 1876.

FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE (CONTINUED)

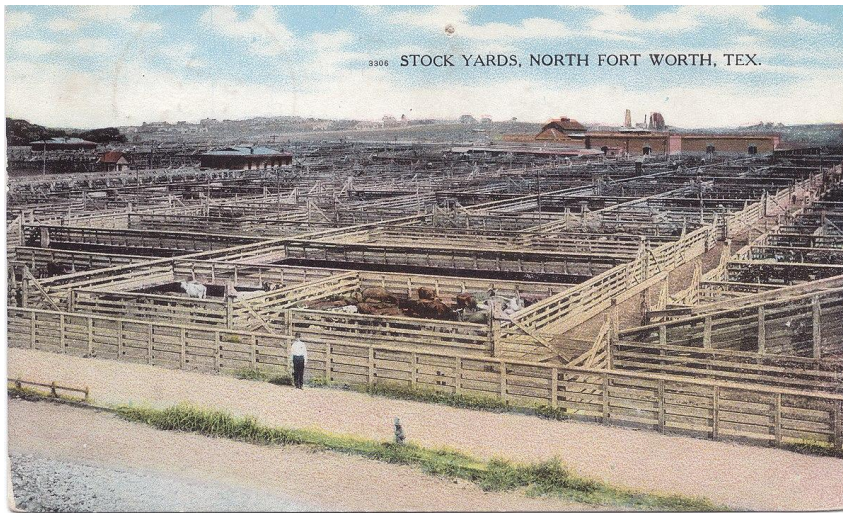
During the same time period but farther to the north, a man named Gustavus Swift was slowly building his empire. Originally starting as a butcher's assistant in his teens, by his early twenties he had become a purchaser of livestock and opened up a butcher shop of his own. Eventually he became a cattle purchaser for a large meat dealer in Boston and moved his office to Chicago in 1875 to be closer to the heart of the market. This proved to be interesting because it brought with it new problems, and the most important of these was how best to haul livestock from the Midwest to the eastern seaboard. At the time, the popular method was shipping live cattle to be slaughtered once they reached their destination, but this method of shipping proved to be detrimental. The cattle were packed like sardines in the rail cars, which would cause some to die while others became so bruised and battered along the way that large sections of the meat were unable to be sold as premium cuts. In order to circumvent this, Gustavus hired an engineer to build a refrigerated railcar so he could slaughter on site and transport the meat.



Back in Fort Worth, railway innovation changed perceptions of the town from a stop along the Chisholm trail to the destination. Why take cattle as far north as Kansas when you could come up from the valley and process the livestock all in the same state? A man named Greenlief Simpson noticed and capitalized on this, eventually corralling Swift, and his refrigerated railcar, into coming down to Panther City and opening a slaughterhouse in 1902. As the procession of cadavers grew, a living workforce was needed to process them, and by 1910 the national census documented over 70,000 citizens inhabiting the area. This expansion supplied enough workers to support a smokehouse, power plant, and fertilizer plant, as well as oleo and lard refineries. Though this proved to be quite a profitable endeavor for many, the tolls of expansion began to become noticeable. Apart from sewage created in the housing facilities, the slaughter house was putting out millions of gallons of effluent every day. By 1909 Swift and Company were processing 5,000 hogs per day, and although they stated that the operation utilized every bit of the animal, some neighbors to the east were skeptical of this claim.

FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE (CONTINUED)

Over the next decade and a half Swift and Company took heat for a variety of things. Upton Sinclair’s book *The Jungle* forced the hand of many meat packing companies because it exposed the unsanitary conditions in which they processed their products. This caused outrage, and across the country different forms of legislation began to take shape in order to curtail the unsavory practices.

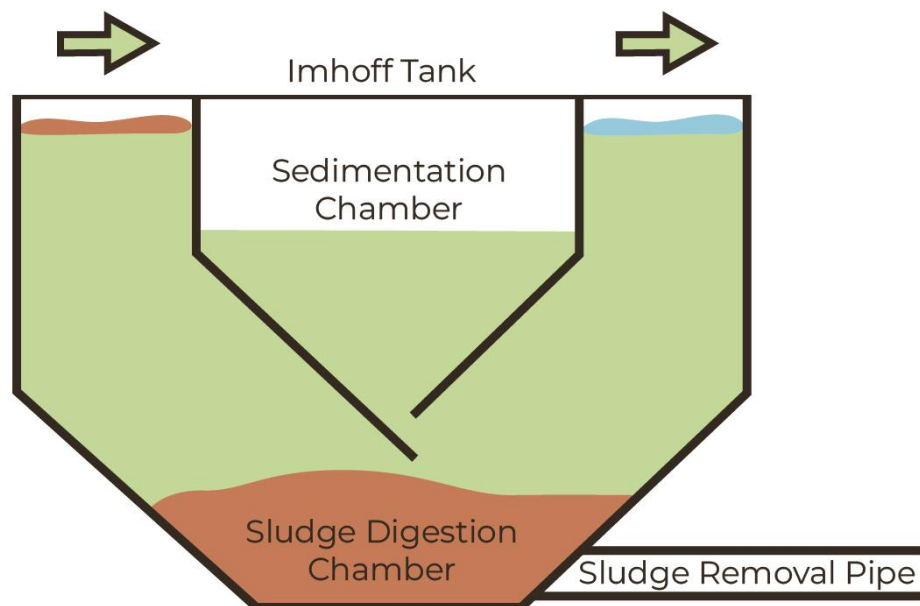


The company also did their best to fight the monopoly busting that was occurring during this period and dragged-out court cases for upwards of a decade. Eventually, all their issues would come to a head in 1925 when the State Health Department of Texas released their Trinity River Sanitary Survey.

In this 259-page report, the health department outlined a myriad of effects that wastewater was having on the river. This included detrimental effects on its wildlife like fish die offs, as well as the negative health of those citizens who used it. It also discussed long-term initiatives that Dallas was undertaking to help clean up the effluent of the city in the face of a growing population. The most poignant section called out Swift and Company by name, mentioning the volume of waste that was entering into Marine Creek and eventually the West Fork by stating that their treatment plant was being overtaxed from the volume of slaughter refuse which led to untreated effluent being dumped into the river. The reason for this public callout was because of typhoid outbreaks which had occurred in the fall of the two years previous. Due to the low flow of the Trinity in late summer, the effluent became a majority of the liquid moving through the channel. Compounded with this there are also many shaded and obstructed areas of the river where much of the blood would pool and stagnate. These pools became the perfect breeding grounds for enormous amounts of bacteria as well reservoirs for mosquitos to gorge themselves. Possibly the most telling excerpts of the report stated, “It is no longer good economics to weigh life and health in the balances with gold...Public streams belong to all the people and the law against pollution is a distinct recognition of their rights to life and their pursuit of happiness along its banks.”

FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE (CONTINUED)

The effects of this landmark report would eventually allow for the Trinity River to become a leader in Texas water quality. Unfortunately, this would take a bit longer than some of the citizens and politicians would have liked. Due to The Great Depression and World War II the priorities of governments from federal to local shifted. On the other side of these events, the Trinity River Authority and Texas Water Quality Board would be established and the landmark Federal Clean Water Act would be passed. Altogether, these would help to usher in a new era of water quality that we are still experiencing today.



What is possibly most interesting about this story is how much the technology has improved in the last century. When Swift and Company first began their operations in Fort Worth, they had a simple way of cleaning their waste. It would first be delivered to an Imhoff tank. This piece of tech allowed heavier waste to travel through the sediment chamber while water passed over the top. The heavier waste would settle into the sludge digestion chamber where it began anaerobic digestion. This waste would eventually be cleaned out and either disposed of in a landfill or repurposed for agricultural fertilizer. The effluent which was able to pass through the chamber would eventually be forced through a filter of some sort. Popular choices at the time were coal or sand. After this step the effluent would be dumped into a local waterway. Although this method was better than no treatment, the sheer volume with which Swift and Company released effluent was too much for the Trinity to handle. Fortunately, modern treatment processes have been greatly refined and are backed by legislation at both the state and federal levels.

FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE (CONTINUED)

Upon initial arrival at a modern treatment plant all water is filtered utilizing screens. This helps to remove any large debris and protect the plant's equipment. It is then sent to a grit removal chamber where the flow of the water is slowed so inorganic material like dirt and sand have time to settle out. At this point the focus is turned to ridding the water of organic matter. The primary clarifier utilizes gravity to allow for sludge to settle at the bottom of the containers while using a skimmer on top to remove any floating debris. Once making it through, the water is sent to aeration tanks. These tanks have air forcibly pumped into them with machines which churn the waters. This functionally turns the container into a 3D bioreactor where bacteria help to remove dissolved gasses as well as transform harmful chemicals. Once this step is completed the water is sent to a secondary clarifier and repeats the same process as the first. Due to the increased bacterial growth from the added oxygen the sludge which settles out is bioactive and is reused in the aeration tank similar to a sourdough starter, while the water must undergo a final step of treatment in order to kill the remaining bacteria. This treatment of choice is normally chlorine, but other methods such as UV lighting or ozone gas are becoming more common. Once this step is complete and all water quality tests are passed the effluent is ready to be released into a wetland or reservoir. The only issue with this is that the water is not yet clean enough to drink after treatment. This is where the power of the natural world and progressive thinking compliment society's needs.

As mentioned earlier, the 1925 report discussed Dallas' plans to expand their wastewater treatment in order to prepare for future growth. Fast forward seven decades later and the North Texas Municipal Water District found itself in need of the same type of forethought. With the population expected to double in the next 50 years the district began to investigate the best way to handle the growth. Not only would this plan take into account the infrastructure needed to clean the wastewater, but also a place to store it. The construction of a reservoir requires an incredible amount of land and resources, but an area near Seagoville would become a major contributor and cornerstone of water quality in North Texas utilizing the natural landscape.



FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE (CONTINUED)

In the 1970s levees were built along the East Fork of the Trinity River and due to this much of the land along the river was cleared. There also happened to be an innovative rancher by the name of John Bunker Sands in the area. Apart from being a rancher he was an advocate for wildlife conservation which led him to look upon his ranch land as an ecosystem as opposed to a place that only grows cattle. Beginning in 1980 he began to restore the natural wetlands on his property as well as focusing on creating more. Over a couple of decades his work would lead to the creation of over 2,100 acres of functional wetlands. The North Texas Municipal Water District recognized this as a place that could help solve their wastewater predicament and organized a partnership which would become the East Fork Water Reuse Project. Beginning in 2004 the project looked to add over 1,800 acres to the current wetlands and eventually achieved this goal in 2009. According to former deputy director Mike Rickman, the clearing of the land in the 70s combined with the relative flatness made this an ideal site. Apart from saving hundreds of millions of dollars that would be needed to develop a new reservoir, the phytoremediation that the wetland plants provide eliminated the need for construction of another water treatment plant. Not only does this project help residents by aiding in the process by which we get drinking water, but it also gives citizens a great area to go and enjoy the wonders of the natural world.

Although the Trinity may have been referred to as the “river of death” in the 1925 report, it was able to be revived and is now able to support a plethora of unique wildlife and a thriving metroplex. Its story is one of exploitation, lack of regulation, and neglect, but it is also a story about recovery, ingenuity, and hope. What is most important about the Trinity’s story is the demonstration of how private landowners, public services, and legislators when acting in tandem for a greater purpose can truly make a change, and even when natural resources are put under duress there is a path forward to restore and utilize them for future generations.



FROM “RIVER OF DEATH” TO BEACON OF HOPE

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ONGOING NTMN PROJECT: TENISON PARK POLLINATOR GARDEN

BY: KAREN ALBRACHT



Nestled between Hollywood/Santa Monica neighborhood and the 80-acre Samuell-Grand Park in East Dallas lies Tension Park. Part of this century-old green space has been preserved in a natural state void of concrete parking lots, pavilions, or other urban intrusions. Here you will find Tension Park Pollinator Garden, established in January 2017.

What started as neighborhood resistance to the staging of construction equipment in the park ended as a 2-acre pollinator garden sanctioned by Dallas Parks Department. In those early days, neighbors volunteered to hand-pull Bermudagrass roots where we intended to create native plant beds. An initial donation from the neighborhood association and subsequent grants from Native Plant Society of Texas gave us the means to add well over 100 native plant species. Our goal then, as it is now, was to restore habitat that had been lost to urbanization.

As our sphere widened, so did our volunteer base to include Master Naturalists. In 2022 and 2023, a creek segment was the focus of two North Texas Master Naturalist class projects, with the goal to control erosion due to over-mowing. A Birding Patch was later added where we've installed native plants especially attractive to birds, such as Turk's Cap, American Beautyberry, Coralberry, Obedient Plant, and native grasses for granivorous birds.



ONGOING NTMN PROJECT: TENISON PARK POLLINATOR GARDEN (CONTINUED)

To accommodate these projects, the Parks Department agreed to designate Grow Zones: areas with very limited, if any, mowing. As a result, in 2020, the first Wild Hyacinth (*Camassia scilloides*) appeared. Who could know how long those seeds had persisted in the ground, mowed bi-weekly for decades, just waiting for a chance to grow. In 2022, we discovered Purple Leatherflower (*Clematis pitcheri*) quietly sprawling atop non-native grasses. Volunteers constructed a short trellis for the vine. It was no more than finished when an American Bumblebee came along, maybe grateful for easier access to the nodding, urn-shaped flower to which it is attracted.



No-mow zones promote biodiversity, improve soil health, prevent erosion, provide food and shelter for insects, birds, and mammals.

Today, Eve's Necklace (*Styphnolobium affine*) and Laurel Cherry (*Prunus carolinia*) trees are allowed to grow in the shade of the Birding Patch, aster colonies have formed around the creek, colorful clusters of Prairie Coneflower (*Ratibida columnifera*) have naturalized within the protected pollinator garden. The will of native plants and the power of nature's ability to persist against decades of human intervention continues to be evident in the most satisfying way.



Two Eastern Bluebird nest boxes grace the garden area. Since installation in 2019, we have welcomed well over 50 bluebirds.

Diversity doesn't end with plant species and wildlife in our garden. We have an eclectic group of volunteers and others who've donated their time and talents to further our goals. Girl Scout and Eagle Scout projects, high school independent study projects, and plein air painting groups have all found their place here. Excellent mentors such as Carol Leonardi Clark, Sam Kieschnick, Judy Meagher, and local native plant nurseryman, Randy Johnson, have encouraged visitors to grow milkweed for Monarchs, appreciate the smallest insects, protect native bees, and understand the symbiotic relationship between native plants and native insects. This garden is common ground where everyone is welcome to observe and learn.

ONGOING NTMN PROJECT: TENISON PARK POLLINATOR GARDEN (CONTINUED)

Tenison Park Pollinator Garden is funded solely by grants and donations. This spring, an exciting addition to the garden has been made possible by a grant from HEB's "Pollinators for Texas" program which supports Master Naturalist projects across Texas. We are transforming about 2000 square feet of existing non-native grasses into native plant beds, installing about 200 plants from 36 species.



Since our beginning in 2017, we've logged over 4500 volunteer hours. Our work could not be possible without people dedicated to improving our environment. Perhaps the most delightful result of this is the fact that two of our volunteers, Liz Tindall and Greg White, are new 2025 NTMN graduates!



More than 100 years ago, Edward Tenison, advancing from messenger boy to chairman of the board of City National Bank of Dallas, would reflect on all the blessings he had been afforded. With the express purpose of fulfilling his "obligation of citizenship," he bestowed 105 acres of land to become a public park where everyone could find "individual happiness and contentment." We are grateful beyond measure and our intention is to honor Mr. Tenison with quality stewardship of his gift.

Tenison Park Pollinator Garden maintains routine volunteer hours on 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month, weather permitting. Please contact karen.albracht@att.net for more info.

FRIENDS OF NTMN

Interview with Steve Smith, Founder and Board Chair of Trinity Coalition BY REBECCA POSTEN

How did the Trinity Coalition get started, and what were its original goals? What is your role with the Trinity Coalition? From 2005 until 2012, I was a board member of Groundwork Dallas, now called Greenspace Dallas, a National Park affiliated non-profit with the goal of making the Great Trinity Forest into a National Park-quality nature park. For 3 of those years I was board chair, eventually flaming out because the City and its donors were not ready for such a big step. I took 3 years off, and then in 2015 founded Trinity Coalition, originally called Trinity Nature Conservancy, with a board of nature-oriented business leaders. Ten years later, I'm still the board chair and not going anywhere. The mission statement of Trinity Coalition is "To transform the Trinity River corridor into a nationally-recognized conservation and recreation area". That's intentionally a very large area and very flexible list of things we can do.



What is the Trinity Coalition focused on today? Earlier this year, Trinity Coalition was selected by the World Cup Organizing Committee to lead nature-adventures for visitors who come here for the World Cup games next summer. This is an opportunity to show the world what an amazing nature-place is the Dallas area. Although this is a year away, we are actively working on determining where we'll be taking these visitors, what they'll do there, how we get them there, and how to make sure everybody is safe. We are already working with the North Texas Master Naturalists and other Master Naturalist chapters around the state, in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebrand the Dallas area as the place to live and visit if you really like nature. Move over Austin, Seattle, and Portland.

How has the Trinity Coalition worked with the Master Naturalists in the past? Trinity Coalition and the Master Naturalist have a natural bond, with both having similar missions. Our main feature is the ability to get local municipalities to allow us to lead nature-oriented projects, like trail-building, and the members of the Master Naturalist chapters gravitate to those projects. Some of our leaders are Master Naturalists, so working together comes easy for both organizations

What else are you working on now where you'd like to partner with Master

Naturalists? We are actively working with the Master Naturalists on the World Cup nature-adventures, and that is leading to some interesting potential partnerships. One that I'm very excited about is the possibility of creating a huge nature-park on some barren land owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers near one of their lakes. I can't be more specific than that at this time because the details are still being worked out. Having worked with Master Naturalists, fighting through Privett and Greenbriers at the Ned and Genie Fritz Texas Buckeye Trail, I believe these folks would relish the opportunity to build trails without either of those invasives, and with a view of the lake and the possibility of cooling off in the lake, while they're working.

Do you have a favorite environmental spot in North Texas that you think everyone

should visit? There are so many that this is hard to answer. If I had to pick one, I'd say the part of the Trinity River from the Santa Fe Trestle Bridge to Loop 12, about a 4-mile stretch. The river has been left natural here, not straightened out like inside the levees. When you paddle here, you'll see Egrets and other wildlife that look at you like "What are you doing here?"

iNat Species Feature

Winter Grapefern

Holubiella lunarioides Photo by: [@jnemoebright on iNat](#)

With a roving eye for the rare and weird, our own taxonomic titan Joshua Ebright spotted a Winter Grapefern (*Holubiella lunarioides*) this spring at Oaklawn Cemetery.

This seedless vascular plant is, according to Josh, "about as primitive of a plant as they come without being a moss." The Winter Grapefern is non-flowering (reproducing by spores) and is dependent on a symbiotic relationship with fungus for its roots to absorb nutrients. Its primitive qualities make for a muddled taxonomic placement, with three different genus designations—*Holubiella*, *Sceptridium*, and *Botrychium* (moonworts)--vying for it (we've applied iNat's designation).

Endangered in Texas (and presumed extinct in at least one other state), this grapefern is primarily observed in old fields and cemeteries during spring months when it sprouts a spore-bearing frond. This year, 18 observations in Texas have been recorded in iNat, 4 of which have been in Oaklawn Cemetery.

Have any weird, noteworthy and exciting observations, or see something incredible posted in the iNat community? Share it with *The Dragonflyer* at dragonflyer@ntmn.org!



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Caleb Hinojos

From the NTMN Class of 2022, our very own biology wizard, Caleb Hinojos joined our chapter to connect with like minded individuals and build a community worthy of our ideals. He enjoys doing nature walks throughout the county and is a huge fan of herps and birds and loves to discuss population genetics. His experience giving a presentation to the chapter about the history of DNA in the lab and its modern utilization in conservation efforts is a real highlight for him. In addition to wildlife photography, Caleb loves to play Magic: The Gathering. He hopes to help contribute to *The Dragonflyer* newsletter through well researched and thoughtful feature stories.

INAT: @texotics | JOINED: Jun 2022 | OBS: 2,610 | SPECIES: 1,448 | IDS: 21,341

Charlie Marshall

A West Texas bookworm, Charlie sought solace from the heat and his studies in the cool shade of the Leon River and, during college, Hill Country streams and escarpments. Cloistered in downtown office towers for a long legal career, he found himself sneaking out for lunchtime explorations of urban streams and parks. These adventures led him to advocating for the restoration of Turtle Creek's Dallas Theater Center and surrounding park, engaging encounters with weathered naturalists, and becoming a member of NTMN in 2024. Today, you can find him in the Great Trinity Forest, East Dallas pollinator gardens and prairies, the Texas Discovery Garden, and training *The Dragonflyer's* eye on our urban ecosystem.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (CONTINUED)

Sam Behrent

After talking with a friend who is also a member, Sam joined the class of 2024 hoping to learn new things and volunteer. Originally from New Orleans and relocated to Texas after Katrina, she has worked at a veterinarian office, studied music, and volunteered at a bird rescue handling adoptions/surrenders and caring for the birds. They have many hobbies including learning new instruments, playing board games and going to conventions with friends, cosplaying, travelling, hiking, art, and will happily stay up too late with a good book. A huge supporter of the DEI committee and the Wellness in Nature program, she hopes to make the natural world accessible and inclusive as possible.



INAT: @txsam | JOINED: Oct 2023 | OBS: 556 | SPECIES: 348 | IDS: 7

Julia Bacak



After joining the NTMN chapter in 2024, Julia Bacak found a great community and way to give back to the community and do some good in the world. Currently a full time motion graphics animator with experience in the advertising, film, and television businesses, she is eager to use her skills to help the chapter achieve its goals. Julia has an art and design background and multiple skills in many areas of art and video creation, and is very into crafting, reading and gaming. As a resident of Duncanville, she is very excited about the upcoming Charles Ladd Preserve project. She is honored to bring her design skills to *The Dragonflyer* newsletter team.

INAT: @apickledpriest | JOINED: Jan 2024 | OBS: 230 | SPECIES: 154 | IDS: 14

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (CONTINUED)



Monica Nagle

After meeting Janet Smith and learning about our chapter and our work, Monica Nagle joined the class of 2019 with a thirst for knowledge about conservation and focused on native plants and how to develop her own yard into a native plant habitat to support our local wildlife. She found our chapter and its members to be so warm and welcoming and loves that she can participate at her own pace. With a degree in chemical engineering, she worked at Texas Instruments for 33 years including in the R&D department where she participated in developing new chip manufacturing processes and their implementation at foundry sites all over the world. Monica is most involved in native plant propagation at Texas Discovery Gardens and also loves participating in field trips. The guides are always so knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and after each trip, she wants to go out and save the world!

Gigi Chance

In 2021, Gigi Chance joined our chapter after meeting a master gardener who was also a master naturalist and was drawn in by the opportunities to learn more about wildlife. A retired Deputy Superintendent, Chief of Staff, and Adjunct Professor with 37 years experience in education, she found like minded friends among our group and is most passionate about her work as the project lead at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science as well as her work as a guide at the Laura W. Bush Native Texas Park. Gigi is a master naturalist, master gardener, and soon to be certified by the Native Plant Society of Texas. She enjoys painting wildflowers, keeping bees, attending live theater, concerts, visiting museums, libraries and national parks. She also volunteers as a court appointed special advocate, is a certified plant-based chef, and has completed half marathons in 47 states, and hopes to reach her goal of all 50 states this July.



INAT: @gigichance | **JOINED:** Aug 2020 | **OBS:** 159 | **SPECIES:** 125 | **IDS:** 0



Final Thoughts

Amy Martin shares Ned Fritz's poem, *The Great Trinity*, in which the river speaks directly to us.

"No one championed the Trinity River with the passion and persistence of noted lawyer, environmentalist, and honorary NTMN Ned Fritz. Thwarting the Trinity Barge Canal plot was primary, but he also opposed river levees that simply pushed flood problems downstream. He loved the river as his poem shows."

The Great Trinity

By Ned Fritz

In my breast and groin, the sun
glistens from my riffles
and cools in my deep pools.

Here I gurgle with energy.
And there I rest
and let a million fish and turtles
feed on my nutrients.

My waters filter outward
under my great forest
upward into my elms, oaks, pecans,
Eve's necklaces, and Texas buckeyes.

I am mother to hawks and thrushes.
I purify the air.

I nurtured the Caddoans.
I attracted the pioneers.
Numberless precious souls appreciate
me.
A million people know me,
but early among them were those who
saw not my glistening
heard not my gurgling
heeded not my calming pools

Their hearing range did not fathom my song.
They bypassed part of me,
strapping my loins with levees.
They built a mighty city at my side.

But upstream in my breast
and downstream in my groin,
I still glisten and gurgle.
I still propagate my great forest.
I still purify the air.

In these domains, there are those who value me.
But there are those who
see not
hear not
heed not.
They want to strip me further.

I am an ardent river
channelized past skyscrapers,
but thence roving freely to the Gulf.
For whom may I flow?

Provided by Ned Fritz Legacy
<https://nedfritz.com/>

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Want to contribute? Reach out to dragonflyer@ntmn.org

