No NPSOT Meeting on January 1

NPSOT Year End Letter, 2018

Salutations! 2018 was another wonderful year for the Collin County chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. Thank you all, each and every one, for making my first year as President so memorable. It’s your passion which drives this chapter, and continues to promote our unique Blackland plant heritage.

This year members once again reached out to the public to share the beauty of native plants—speaking to garden clubs and school groups, helping design school gardens, leading plant walks in local prairies and woodlands, and assisting in conservation efforts in public spaces. We continued to pick and package native prairie seeds for sale as well as donation to restoration projects—our beautiful native flora continues to spread, helping pollinators as well as humans. We’ve continued the tradition of members donating their time to provide consulting services to cities, HOAs and private landowners who continue to combat and counteract the loss of our native flora.

We’ve sparred with those who wish to destroy remaining fragments, and shared our passion for this amazing prairie with any and all. We’ve rescued plants, encouraged restorations, taken part in biodiversity surveys, and sponsored/taught NLCP classes. Several of our members were key contributors to the newest class which focused on natives plants for birds.

Our Programs Chairpersons Carrie and Bill certainly did an outstanding job this year with amazing speakers, and 2019 will be even better! Our primary expenses for the year are the honorariums we give to speakers from outside our chapter, and our annual donation to the Heard Museum to express our appreciation for all they do for us. We do receive a small portion of your annual state dues, but rely on the generosity of our members and friends to help support the quality programming we are striving to provide.

I respectfully ask everyone to please remember the Native Plant Society of Texas’ Collin County chapter in your annual year end giving. Your donation enables us to provide quality speakers and field trips for you, and to help train the next generation of native plant enthusiasts. (Contributions of this type, above and beyond yearly dues, for which you receive no tangible goods or services, are 100% tax deductible.)

Make checks out to: Collin County NPSOT, and mail to our treasurer, Betsy Farris, here:
NPSOT c/o Betsy Farris
6015 Canyon Springs Rd
Dallas, Texas 75248

Also, please keep saving those native seeds! A main source of our income is from the sale of seed packets, and your contributions are invaluable!

Lorelei Stierlen, President Collin County Chapter of NPSOT
Author’s Note: At the recent NLCP class on Native Plants for Birds, there was a question about owls. At lunch, I dug up some slides I had put together years ago. Here’s the story.

Years ago (2004), a neighbor went on vacation and Sherry was doing their chores: feeding the dog, 2 cats, 8 chickens, and 2 horses; checking the horses’ shoes (and removing a bent shoe); gathering the eggs; and putting the chickens back in the hen house at dark.

One of the roosters was missing. And they had lost a hen a week earlier. Sherry went looking for the rooster. She started out by the pond and walked around the back fence towards the West then North. Found nothing but decided to keep walking along the trees toward the North. She turned back toward the barn at the old fence line in the North pasture.

Something white caught her eye. At first, she disregarded it. But there should not have been anything that size and color in the pasture, so she walked over to look.

She did not know exactly what it was but knew it was a baby raptor of some type and eventually spotted a nest with a Great Horned Owl staring down at her. The baby was alert and didn’t seem hurt, just cold and damp. It watched Sherry very closely.

She had her cell phone so called me and got the number for the Heard Raptor Rehab, called them, and left a message.

By then one of the curious horses wondered what Sherry was doing and came over. Now she had the problem of the baby getting snuffled or stepped on, so Sherry moved the horses into a different pasture.

Erich from Heard called back and was excited to help. He and a helper came out with a long ladder. Erich examined the baby (no broken bones or cuts, but you should see the feet on that critter) and decided that it could just go back in the nest. He put the baby in a Home Depot nail apron climbed the ladder to get into the tree then had to climb the tree the rest of the way to the nest.

It was a very dense tree, lots of branches and twigs so it was a challenge for him to get up there without hurting the baby. Once there, he took a look at the other baby and the food and remains of what they had been eating. There was rabbit and Meadowlark (he did not know that Great Horned Owls ate Meadowlark) and lots of other feathers. We asked him about chicken and he started pulling out some of the feathers that he did not recognize. The second one he pulled out looked terribly familiar…no doubt about it. He said that he could identify feathers from almost every wild bird but did not know that one…the rest of us did know it (the missing hen).
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Erich said the babies were about 4 weeks old and would remain in the nest for about another week or two, and then will start “Branching Out”. They would start moving around in the tree going from branch to branch and beginning to exercise their wings, and should be able to fledge in about 4 weeks.

Erich said Heard had over seventy Great Horned Owl babies right then. He seemed very happy to be able to just put one back in the nest.

The rooster showed up outside the fence down at the pond and Sherry had to help him get back into the pasture.

Mama owl watched us the next time we got close to check up on our little owlet. The look in Mama Owl’s eyes let us clearly know that we can watch from a safe distance, but if we get close, she’ll sink her claws or beak into our flesh. So, we watched the nest from afar after that.

A few days after his sibling fledged, we were there to see that our little guy had grown and was ready to fledge.

So, my story has taken us from a lost chicken to owls. So, how do we get to native plants? Here’s how.

The bunnies had been eating my Coneflowers (Echinacea) shoots as they emerge. (Who knew bunnies were such selective eaters?) We put coffee cans around the coneflowers and the bunnies would knock them over to get to the tender shoots.

We saw Mama Owl teaching the Owlets how to hunt. Well, within a week or so, we noticed that our Coneflowers were not being eaten anymore.

We still have lots of bunnies around, but they have left the coneflowers alone to thrive over the last 14 years.

There we go: “From a Lost Chicken to Native Plants!”

Perhaps, as a subtitle, we can use:

“Owls Think Coneflowers are Pretty!”
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Save the Dates

March 16th and 17th – Master Gardeners’ Show
The Garden Show is held at Myers Park and Event Center in northwest McKinney. NPSOT will again have a booth at the show to spread information and sell our native seeds.

If you’ve been to the show, you know how much you enjoyed it. If you’ve never been to the show, you are missing a great opportunity to learn and buy plants and garden related items.

Information will be available in upcoming newsletters and at our meetings.

April 12th, 13th, 14th – Heard Museum Native Plant Sale
The Native Plant Sale is held in the parking lot at the Heard Museum in southeast McKinney. NPSOT will again have a booth to spread information and sell our native seeds, and will also provide customers with guidance and advice on plants as well as helping customers carry and load plants.

This is one of the largest Native Plant Sales in the area. It is a great opportunity for us.

Information will be available in upcoming newsletters and at our meetings.

Collin County NPSOT General information
The Collin County chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas meets the first Tuesday of January through October, in Laughlin Hall at the Heard Museum. Unless otherwise noted, doors open before 7:00pm and the program starts at 7:15pm.

The Native Plant Society of Texas is a non-profit organization with the goal to promote the conservation, research, and utilization of the native plants and plant habitats of Texas, through education, research, and example.

Thanks for your support.
email: collincountynpsot@gmail.com
website: http://www.npsot.org/CollinCounty/