June 2 NPSOT Meeting to be held On Line

We will be holding our June meeting using the Zoom App. You can “attend” from the comfort and safety of your own home. **We will send meeting information out next week and in the next newsletter.**

- Zoom is a web-based application for teleconferencing. You can use a cell phone, tablet, or computer, as long as you can connect to the internet. You will need to go to [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) (or the appropriate App Store for your phone) and download the Application that will start your Zoom session.
- To ensure the Presentation runs smoother, the Meeting Host will Mute everyone’s Video and Microphone. A Chat icon at the bottom of the screen allows you to ask a question or interject a comment. And, at the end of the Presentation, the Video and Microphones will be reactivated.
- You can mute your camera’s Video and/or Microphone if you wish to have some privacy.

People should plan to connect about 10 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start to test your microphones and say “Hi!” to everyone.

Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area

The group Friends of LLELA has started making a series of short videos called “A seasonal look at a Texas Blackland Prairie at LLELA. What it takes to maintain and restore a prairie”. They did a controlled burn and these videos track the plants that have come back. Our own Carol Clark identifies many of the plants in the area in 3 of the short videos. They can be seen here: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/LLELAFriends/videos/?ref=page_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/LLELAFriends/videos/?ref=page_internal)

The video has been cut into short clips, so no big time commitment is needed. Carol will continue to work with Friends of LLELA to visit the restoration sites and follow the life of a prairie through the seasons after a controlled burn.

The Friends of LLELA proudly serve the 2,000 acres of LLELA which is located south of Lewisville Lake, Lewisville, TX. You can find more information at [http://llelafriends.org/home.aspx](http://llelafriends.org/home.aspx).
5, 5, 5, 5, 4?! by Carol Clark

Editor’s Note: This is adapted from a blog post Carol just made. You can go see more of Carol’s posts at carolsworld.net.

I made a special trip yesterday to beef up my photo portfolio of this wonderful species, Asclepias asperula sbsp. capricornu, Antelope Horns Milkweed. Of course I meant to spend just a few minutes, but I ended up taking quite a while since I found “too many” interesting other things while I was there. I noticed something odd about this one milkweed flower cluster.

All over this piece of land, thousands of Antelope Horns Milkweed specimens bloom. For the most part, they follow the simple time-honored rule: parts of a milkweed flower occur in fives. But, if you look closely, every now and then there is a renegade, a rule breaker, a maverick. On this plant, almost all the flowers adhere to the traditional rule of fives, but there is one lone flower that doesn’t display the usual pentagons and five pointed stars. It has squares instead of pentagons, four-armed equilateral crosses instead of stars, and four petals, and four hoods—not five.

It’s only one flower out of the whole head, and it appears to be perfectly formed other than the count of parts, but it’s an anomaly, and it makes me wonder when and why this one lone flower went off the rails of genetic determination and did something very different than all its neighbors.

There are other interesting things about this field, starting with the fact that it hosts five species of milkweeds. I have seen probably hybrids, strangely colored specimens and other things that ought to be studied. Today, I have just enough time to wonder, “Why 4?”
I wanted to add a few more examples for my little game. Killdeer are interesting birds to have around, definitely **Friend**. I took this photo about 35 years ago, in the field near where we later built our home. The concerned parent had been flitting and rolling around like it had a broken wing to try to take our attention away from the nest and protect the eggs. When I didn’t fall for its antics, the concerned parent set up to take a last stand as guard. Fear not, I had a good long lens for the photo so as not to disturb things. As I walked away, I did get the distinct impression this protective parent was following me to be sure I was really leaving. (I guess that might make me a **Foe**?)

For another of my killdeer stories, look back to the Collin County NPSOT Newsletter for April 2020 Week 4 issue article on **Home, Sweet Home!**

Armadillos can be a royal pain sometimes, definitely **Foe**. A few years ago, an armadillo moved in and started digging holes all over the yard. I finally saw the little demon on the carport on the front of our shop. It was investigating the gardening pots and supplies I had stacked there. “Aha! I have a chance to get rid of this thing, once and for all.” I had nothing to trap it with if I went inside to get my wife’s grandfather’s 410 double-barrel shotgun – even if I had any idea where she had it stored. (Anyway, I’m too squeamish to actually shoot something up close.) So I grabbed a solid stick and started hitting it on the back. The armadillo took off toward the back of our property (but they don’t run very fast). I chased it downhill, slapping its back with my stick, for over 800 feet, before I left it alone down near the pond with a beaver dam.

I guess that I convinced it to stay away. I haven’t been bothered by Armadillos since. I imagine the scared little critter, as it sat around the campfire with friends, and warned them about that crazy guy with a big stick.

Squirrels are a tough call. This photo was provided by a friend’s wife in Garland. As you see, this critter has been into the potted plants on their patio. And, of course, their dogs go crazy when the catch sight of it.

I have a couple of squirrels who brave the trek across the field and fence to my backyard bird feeder. The only tree that could offer protection is in my backyard near the feeder. Did you know that you can teach a squirrel English? When I see the bandits, I open the patio door; yell “SQUIRREL!” and jump back, letting Remington, my 100 pound German Shepherd, out to chase them. The squirrels have learned that “SQUIRREL!” is English for “Big Dog is charging out the door at us – RUN!” Sometimes they flee up the tree, so I leave Remington out to harass them. But, usually they take off on a straight line toward the fence.
By the way, did you know that a squirrel running at full speed will fit through the weave of a chain link fence without slowing down – IF a 100 pound German Shepherd is closing in on them rapidly? You hear a “twang-g-g-g” and shortly after that, an extremely animated squirrel (now safely outside the fence) can be seen and heard throwing a bit of a fit at Remington (and me).

And, by the way, rabbits can also fit through the weave of a chain link fence while running at full speed, without slowing down – if Remington is chasing them, too.

A flock of vultures, circling overhead – Friend or Foe? Well, I’m not sure. But it brings to mind a situation with our first German Shepherd, Max, years ago. It turns out that Max was smarter than I am. He had figured out that I had some serious health problems.

When he would notice that I was starting to show signs of stress, he’d come over and stop me from working in the yard, and make me go sit down to rest. Well, I finally got an angioplasty done, and I was ready to go.

But even after that, he would occasionally come over and stop me, but now he’d make me go indoors. I couldn’t figure out what he was keying off of.

Well, it’s quite common for vultures to be lazily circling overhead. Often, I didn’t even notice them.

The experts say that dogs can’t count, but I (now) disagree. I did finally figure out that Max was keying off the number of vultures in the flock, circling above. Without fail, if there were 3 or less vultures overhead, Max was just fine. However, quite consistently, when the flock got to 4 or more, Max wanted us to go inside! Even if he was outside alone, he would come to the door and ask (demand) to be let inside. When I would look up, there would always be 4 or more vultures circling above. I guess that he had decided that 4 were enough to carry him off?

Before I close, I’m going to risk my life. I’m going to look at plants, (mostly) native plants. I know, I know. An audience of people with very strong opinions on native plants, and I dare to call them Friend or Foe? Am I crazy?

For me, Primrose is a FOE! This stuff is extremely invasive, and spreads like wildfire. I’ve had people (who live in town, where they don’t see it much) tell me how pretty it is and ask for a start. My answer is “Yes, but you have to take all 10 acres of it.”

And then there are Dandelions. I’m not sure. They do give me another reason to go mow the yard, just in case I’m feeling lazy.

Ahhhh! Milkweed. Before I joined NPSOT, I was in the Master Gardener program. They taught me that fields are supposed to be uniformly covered with some form of grass and gardens are supposed to have plants bought from a commercial nursery.

Milkweed was a Foe! I was supposed to mow fields during the spring and summer to prevent those nasty non-grasses from going to seed. And I was supposed to remove any plant from the gardens that wasn’t bought at a nursery.
Then I joined NPSOT. Talks about Monarchs would run through my mind as I spent hours in the heat, on my tractor, mowing (milkweed) all summer. Finally, I felt soooo guilty that I just HAD to commit to NOT spending hours upon hours mowing all summer.

And in my gardens, where Milkweed would come up (like a weed?), this year I finally made the commitment to NOT pull those Milkweeds that did sprout. (They have a huge tuberous root that I was leaving anyway.)

Milkweed is now my **Friend!** It’s just a convenient coincidence that it also gives me an excuse to not work as hard during the long, hot summer.

I’ll close with Johnsongrass – **FOE!** I had a shrub bed covered with weed-block fabric, under mulch. Johnson grass showed up anyway. Eventually I pulled up some of the fabric and found Johnsongrass rhizomes (runners) were 10 feet long in some cases. They would run along the surface under the cloth until they found a hole to pop up through. If you dig Johnsongrass, and leave ½” piece of a root a full 2 feet below ground, the darn plant will still return.

*Somewhere, someone probably likes Johnsongrass. But, if they do, I suspect that it’s because they found some lucrative, commercial application for it!*

Maybe I have too much free time on my hands. Why else would I be thinking about what is **Friend** and what is **Foe**?

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**NICE Native Plant Partners**

The NICE Native Plant Partners program (Natives Improve and Conserve Environments) is a collaboration between the Native Plant Society of Texas and local nurseries around the state to offer natives that are right for the local environment.

Native Plant Partners committees run by our local chapters create a list of Plant of the Month plants in cooperation with participating local nurseries and wholesalers in order to assure availability.

**Native Plant Partner Nurseries (around North Texas)**

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<td><a href="http://www.stuarnurseryinc.com/">www.stuarnurseryinc.com/</a></td>
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**Chapters Participating (around North Texas)**

Use Control-Click on the Chapter Name to go to their website

- **Collin County**
  - Cross Timbers Native Plants (Weatherford)
  - Dallas
  - North Central Texas (Tarrant County)
  - Trinity Forks (Denton County)
  - Tyler
Congratulations Recent Graduate

Congratulations are due for our president, Lorelei. She just finished her 4\textsuperscript{th} college degree.

Thoughts for the Day

✓ “I will be the gladdest thing under the sun! I will touch a hundred flowers and not pick one.” Edna St. Vincent Millay
✓ “There is poetry among the wildflowers.” Rachel Irene Stevenson
✓ “What a lonely place it would be to have a world without a wildflower!” Roland R Kemler