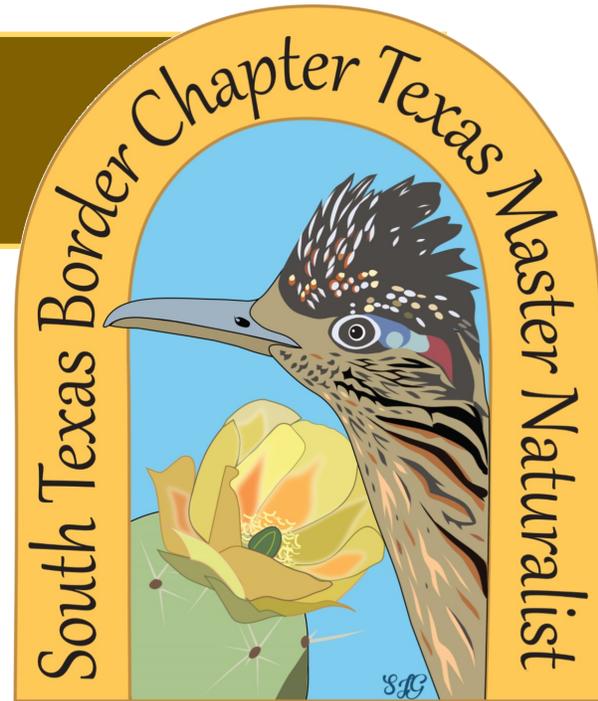


Newsletter Update:
September 20, 2017

A Two Phase Field Trip to an Ancient Montezuma Cypress Tree and an Evening Flight of Bats

Neil Cassady

Photography Courtesy Ralph Philip



At 6:00 pm on August 31st, twenty-seven Texas Master Naturalists met in the Foy's Supermarket parking lot on a field trip with two objectives. The first objective was to see the 900 year old Montezuma Cypress Tree near Abram. The members convoyed from Foy's led by member and TWPD Advisor to our chapter, Javier De Leon.



Our thanks to the long line of land owners, including Metz and Waite Farms , for maintaining this time battered but still vital tree.



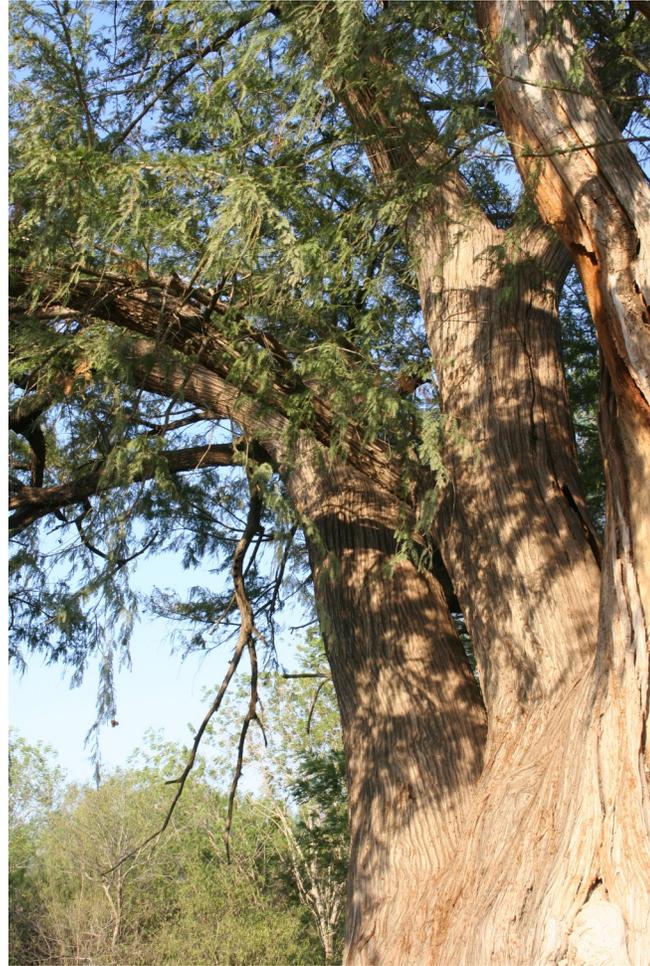
The Naturalists posed to give a sense of proportion to the viewer.



Tony Reisinger, member and Texas Agrilife advisor to our chapter, warned everyone not to stand underneath the rather large dead limb of the tree. People in forested areas of the U. S. call those dead limbs “widowmakers” for a reason.



This old tree has survived all of the vagaries of our climate and the tempers of the river to become a veritable stand-alone habitat. Woodpecker residence was apparent. But, numerous insects and mammals and reptiles may also call his branches home.



Of course there must be a group photo.



The group convoyed back to Foy's parking lot to join in a bat watch with our fellow chapter member Katherine Jones. Ms. Jones is a researcher of and an advocate for bats. She explained that this colony was mostly composed of Mexican Free-tailed Bats.



Katherine showed us where the bats live. Notice the dark brown streaks of guano staining the tan retaining wall. The bats "hang out" (sorry) in the space between the concrete capping and the wall.



As we waited for the colony to embark on their hunt for night-flying insects, Ms. Jones, with great enthusiasm, told us about the lives of bats.



Mother bats find their little ceiling-hanging babies by the sound of the baby's cries. That makes perfect sense.

Finally, the hunt began.



Momentum built slowly



The air traffic got thicker.



The hunt was serious now.



Many people feel toward “flying mice” much as they feel toward the flying monkeys in “The Wizard of Oz”. However, bats play an integral part in the system of life on earth, and they need to be protected and encouraged in their quest for insects. All of us should be thankful for people, like Ms. Jones, who have embraced the passion for studying this fuzzy, but not so cute, animal.