Hello! I’m Nancy Nine-band and I’m just about to start a great adventure! Texas is such a big and wonderful place. From mountains to beaches and prairies to pine forests, Texas has a lot to see, and I have decided to take a trip to check out as much of it as I can! With all of the different habitats in the state, I am bound to meet all kinds of new friends, too. I can’t wait!

Ever since I was a little dillo, I have loved to travel. There is just something about the open road and the feel of the Texas sun against my armor that makes me feel like dancing! Don’t tell anyone, but sometimes when I’m wandering, I’ll dilo-dance along my way instead of walking. My brother Ned tells me that I am crazy to dance when there is no music but I don’t care. Mom says my dancing is what makes me you-neek!

I’m packing up my things this week and it’s hard to decide what to bring…. So far, I have sunscreen, a bandanna, Ned’s last three packs of gummy grubs (hee,hee), and my favorite walking stick... Hope I’m not forgetting anything!

I have promised my friends at TWA that I will write while I am away, so check out each issue of Critter Connections for updates on my travels! Wish me luck!

Until next time,

Nancy

TWA Mascot No Longer a Mystery... Nancy Nine-Band Makes History

By Sarah Stannard

MEET OUR WINNER!

Name: Mary Katherine McNabb
City: Fair Oaks Ranch
Title: Nancy Nine-band
Congratulations!

Mary Katherine will receive a $50 gift certificate and a TWA t-shirt.

Critter Connections is made possible by a grant from the San Antonio Livestock Exposition.

Purpose:

Conservation

LEGACY

A Texas Wildlife Association Stewardship Venture

San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo
**Meet Our Runners Up!**

Name: Maxwell Joseph Westheimer  
City: San Antonio  
Title: Petey Opossum

Name: Preston Swearingen Westheimer  
City: San Antonio  
Title: Pete the Porkupine

Name: Mitchell Jackson  
City: Houston  
Title: Bearded Dragon

Name: Daniel Reed Ehlinger  
City: Devine  
Title: Kooter the Coyote

Name: Sierra Welch  
City: San Antonio  
Title: Fly Like the Eagle

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**Youth Sponsored New Members Contest!**

**Sign up new TWA members and win great prizes!**

The contest runs from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. For more contest details, see the Membership page in *Texas Wildlife* or contact Claire Massey at 1-800-TEX-WILD or by email at cmassey@texas-wildlife.org.

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**Little Lonestars 2007**

Ask your parents to register now!

Where: TWA’s Annual Convention at the Hyatt Hill Country Resort & Spa  
When: June 29-30, 2007

The Little Lonestars program provides a full range of activities throughout the entire Convention weekend for children ages 3-12, but parental supervision is required for 3-4 years of age. Activities include a poster contest, crafts, games, goodie bags, and lots of outdoor fun!

Our goal is to teach young people about the importance of common sense habitat conservation on private land, and the beauty and majesty of the wildlife species supported by the tremendous efforts of landowners and managers while spending quality time with the entire family.

**Friday** 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
**Saturday** 9 to 11 a.m. & 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Turtle Word Find

AQUATIC
CLUTCH
PLASTRON
SLIDER
BASKING
ECTOTHERMIC
REPTILE
CARAPACE
OMNIVORE
SCUTES

Turtle Sudoku

Cut your turtle pieces out below and then fill in the grid so that in each row, column and square each turtle only appears once.
Long before Leonardo and his brothers began roaming city sewers, another breed of turtle swam within the freshwaters of Texas: The Red-Eared Slider! Instead of a ninja mask, this turtle wears bright red spots on the sides of his head, making it easy to identify this species from other types of turtles!

Red-eared sliders are green to olive-brown in color and have bright yellow stripes across the fleshy parts of their body including their legs, neck, head, and tail. Like all turtles, sliders have a shell made up of two parts: a carapace (the upper shell on the back) and a plastron (the tummy shell). Both the carapace and plastron are made up of scale-like pieces called scutes. The scutes of a red-eared’s plastron are often bright yellow in color with dark spots in the center. A lot of folks believe that turtles can leave their shell like a hermit crab does but that is not true! Turtle shells are basically backbones and rib-cages fused together. Humans need backbones for support in movement and our ribcages protect vital organs like our heart and lungs. Turtles need support and protection too—they just wear theirs outside of their bodies instead of inside like we do!

Red-eared sliders are aquatic and can be found throughout Texas in virtually all freshwater sources from ponds and tanks to rivers and lakes. Turtles are also reptiles which means they are ectothermic or “cold-blooded” and have to depend on the weather outside to regulate their body temperature. Often, you will see red-eared sliders perched on top of logs, rocks, and even on top of other turtles with their necks out-stretched. This behavior is called basking, and it is a way for turtles to warm themselves up by absorbing the heat from the sun.

When they aren’t basking, red-eared sliders like to eat many different things including aquatic plants, insects, fish and dead animal matter called carrion. Because they eat both plants and animals, sliders are called omnivores.

Female sliders are actually larger than males and can grow to a length of about 11 inches while males tend to be about 8 inches long. However, male turtles generally have longer claws and tails than the females.
Male sliders use their long “fingernails” to impress females during courtship. So, in the turtle world, the males would bethe ones visiting salons to get their “nails” done!

In the Spring, females will leave their aquatic homes to dig nests on land and lay a batch of eggs called a clutch. Once the eggs have been laid, the females return to the water and therefore never have the chance to meet their babies. When baby turtles or hatchlings emerge from their nests 8-10 weeks later, they are just a little bit larger than a U.S. quarter. These tiny turtles must avoid being eaten by predators like raccoons, coyotes, and crows as they make their way from their terrestrial nests to the water that will become their new home. The hatchlings’ small size makes them the perfect bite-sized meal for lots of aquatic critters too like frogs, snakes, wading birds, and even fish!

Red-eared sliders are just one of twenty-nine different types of turtles that make Texas home. From river cooters to sea turtles, tortoises to terrapins, Texas is rich with turtles. There are many different kinds of turtles that live in Texas. Check out the next column to see more Texas turtles!

Spiny Softshell turtles have flat, leathery, flexible shells, which resemble a pancake, and they have a habit of burying themselves in the sand.

Diamondback Terrapins live in saltwater, so they have special salt glands near the ears to excrete excess salt.

Ornate Box Turtles live on the land, hibernate during cold weather, and have a hinged plastron, so it can completely shut the shell for protection against predators.

Yellow Mud Turtles will emit a strong odor from the musk glands found on the sides of the body when alarmed.
Did you know that...

- the alligator snapping turtle has a worm-like fleshy structure on its tongue? It uses this to attract unsuspecting fish for a meal!

- several species of turtle and tortoise may live to be over a hundred years old, including the American Box turtle? One Indian Ocean Giant Turtle lived about 200 years!

- turtles have good eyesight and an excellent sense of smell? Their hearing and sense of touch are also good, and even their shell contains nerve endings!

- Testudo, the Latin word for tortoise, shell, arch or vault, was also the name given to a technique used by Roman soldiers in warfare? Standing close together, in the shape of a rectangle, they held their shields flat over their heads, to form a protective dome, allowing them to approach the enemy en masse, unharmed by spears, stones and arrows.

Color Me...

I am a Common Snapping Turtle

- A sharp, horny beak with no teeth. Very strong jaws.
- Five clawed toes on each foot
- A long tail
- Hard shell made of bony plates covered by horn
**Ingredients:**
Medium-Sized Round Sugar Cookie
Whole Almonds
Mint Chocolate Chip Ice Cream
Chocolate Syrup
(the kind that freezes make a hard shell!)

**Tools/Materials:**
Plate
Ice Cream Scoop
Spoon

**Directions:**
1) Place a medium-sized, round sugar cookie on a plate. (The cookie will be your turtle’s plastron or tummy shell.)
2) Next, scoop a mound of ice cream large enough to cover the cookie and place it on top of the sugar cookie. (The ice cream will be your turtle’s carapace or top shell.)
3) Use a spoon to smooth out the top and sides of your ice cream.
4) Whole almonds are tear-drop shaped. They have a round end and a pointy end. Add the turtle’s head by placing an almond, pointy side in, towards the top front of the ice cream scoop.
5) Add the turtle’s front and back feet by placing four almonds, round-side in, towards the bottom of the ice cream scoop on the right and left sides.
6) Add a tail by placing an almond, round-side in, in between the back feet.
7) Using chocolate syrup, decorate your turtle’s carapace however you wish!
8) ENJOY!

Do you have a fun recipe you would like to share with other TWA kid-members? If so, write it up and submit it to TWA, care-of Critter Cuisine!

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**Kids Spotlight**

**Questionnaire**

1. What is your full name? Trevor Alan Dickschat
3. How old are you? 15 years old
4. What grade are you in? 9th grade at Brenham High School
5. What is your favorite school subject? Why? Spanish because it is a fun class and I enjoy talking a lot. We have to do a lot of oral presentations.
6. What is your least favorite school subject? Why? Physical and Chemistry Sciences because I have a hard time understanding them.
7. What are some of your hobbies? Fishing, hunting, running, playing X-box, paintball, band and showing pigs.
8. What is your favorite outdoor activity? FISHING
9. What do you want to do when you grow up? Something with wildlife and maybe engineering.
10. Who is your “hero”? Mr. Pierce for helping me with the Brigades.
11. If you were granted one wish, what would you wish for? A BIG hunting lease
12. Describe yourself in three words. Outgoing, Caring, Funny
13. What is the best way for kids to get involved with the outdoors? Go to a Texas Brigade Camp!
14. Anything else you would like to add? The Brigades are very fun, and a good way to get to know the outdoors. You also meet a lot of interesting people and make many friends.